



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*April 1, 2014*

## **Devils-Sabres Preview**

By Chris Altruda

Associated Press

April 1, 2014

The Devils were near-perfect in their final eight games to clinch their first playoff berth after moving to New Jersey.

They may need perfection this time around in their final eight to have history repeat itself.

New Jersey seeks consecutive wins against the lightweights of the Eastern Conference to further its postseason push Tuesday night when it visits the Buffalo Sabres.

In their sixth season after relocating from Colorado, the Devils (32-28-15) claimed the final Patrick Division spot in 1987-88 with seven wins and a tie in their final eight contests to overtake Pittsburgh and the New York Rangers and eventually finished one victory shy of the Stanley Cup finals.

While the playoff format has changed, New Jersey again has to leapfrog a pair of teams down the stretch to claim the last wild-card spot in the conference. The Devils, currently 11th in the East and trailing Washington and Toronto, drew within three points of eighth-place Columbus with a 6-3 victory over Florida on Monday as Travis Zajac had his first career hat trick and matched a personal best with four points.

"All we care about is wins at this point," said Zajac, whose linemates Jaromir Jagr and Ryan Clowe added two goals and five assists. "The wingers were on it. They were getting me the puck."

Clowe, though, is uncertain for this game after leaving in the second period with an undisclosed injury after taking a hit from Quinton Howden.

Jagr's season-high four points moved him within striking range of moving up the all-time lists in all three primary offensive categories. He is three goals behind Mike Gartner for sixth, trails Steve Yzerman by three points for sixth and is two assists behind Gordie Howe for eighth.

"I don't think we spent much energy today, so we should have a lot of energy for (Tuesday) but we've got to play better," Jagr said.

Devils coach Pete DeBoer pulled Martin Brodeur after he allowed three goals on nine shots, and Corey Schneider could get the start after stopping all 13 shots he faced.

Buffalo (20-45-9) has lost four straight and 11 of 12 overall (1-10-1) following its 4-3 overtime loss to Tampa Bay on Saturday. The Sabres took an early 2-0 lead on goals by Matt D'Agostini and Cody Hodgson 1:47 apart, but squandered that lead nearly as quickly and eventually lost on a power-play goal by Steven Stamkos in the extra period.

While the present is bleak for the Sabres, they did commit to their future Monday by signing coach Ted Nolan to a three-year extension and dropping the interim tag. Though Nolan is 16-30-8 since replacing the fired Ron Rolston, general manager Tim Murray is convinced Nolan is who the team needs as it prepares to replenish its system with high draft picks acquired from dealing away veterans over the past two seasons.

"I don't know if there was one 'Eureka moment,'" said Murray, whose team could potentially have three first-round picks in 2014. "But I certainly got to the point where I knew I wanted him back, and I wanted him to be our head coach. And that wasn't yesterday or the day before."

"We have to get him better players," he added. "It doesn't take a genius to figure that out."

The teams have combined for four goals in splitting their previous two games. Steve Bernier's goal 41 seconds into overtime on Nov. 30 gave New Jersey a 1-0 victory as Schneider made 15 saves for the shutout, and D'Agostini's power-play tally with 8:11 remaining lifted the Sabres to a 2-1 win Jan. 4.

## **Sabres sign coach Nolan to 3-year extension**

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

March 31, 2014

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) -- Buffalo Sabres interim coach Ted Nolan will oversee the team's rebuilding plans beyond this season after signing a three-year contract extension on Monday.

The team lifted Nolan's "interim" tag from his title by announcing the signing on its Twitter page. The Sabres' post included a picture of Nolan signing his contract alongside owner Terry Pegula and general manager Tim Murray.

A person familiar with the contract revealed the length of the deal to The Associated Press. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the Sabres did not disclose the terms.

"I said back in November that it was a dream to be able to come back and coach the Sabres, and that's still true today," Nolan said in the Sabres' release. "Hockey is my life, and Buffalo is a special place for hockey. I'm excited by the challenge facing our team and our organization. And I'm truly thankful to have this opportunity."

The extension does not come as a surprise after Nolan and Murray indicated on several occasions in recent weeks that the two sides were close to completing a deal.

"Teddy has proven time and again that he is an exceptional leader, motivator and teacher," Murray said in a statement released by the team. "He is exactly what we need in a head coach for our hockey team, and we're confident in his ability to guide our players and turn this team around."

Nolan returned for a second stint in Buffalo in mid-November, when he was hired on an interim basis with the opportunity to keep job after the season. He took over for Ron Rolston, who was fired along with GM Darcy Regier, after Buffalo got off to a franchise-worst 4-15-1 start.

Nolan is staying on even though Pat LaFontaine - the person who brought him on board - abruptly stepped down as Sabres president of hockey operations on March 1, after only 3-1/2 months on the job. The two were close, and LaFontaine's departure opened questions as to whether Nolan might follow him out.

The Sabres (20-45-9) remain in last place, where they are likely to finish with only two weeks left in the season. They're 1-10-1 in their past 12 games in preparing to host the New Jersey Devils on Tuesday.

With 142 goals, Buffalo is flirting with setting an NHL single-season low for goals scored since the league expanded from its Original Six teams in 1967-68. The record in a non-lockout-shortened season is 151 goals scored set by the 1997-98 Tampa Bay Lightning, according to STATS.

The Sabres' woes do not entirely reflect Nolan's coaching ability. He's been saddled with a team that's been beset by injuries and has traded away many of its key players over the past calendar year.

Murray completed a veteran purge in the days leading up to the league's trade deadline on March 5 by dealing away much of what was left of the team's aging core.

Goalie Ryan Miller and captain Steve Ott were traded to St. Louis on Feb. 28. Then, in the hours leading up to the deadline, the Sabres made four more trades, including one that sent forward Matt Moulson to Minnesota.

Nolan previously went 73-72-19 in two seasons in his first tenure in Buffalo. He left following 1996-97 season because he was unhappy with the team's one-year contract offer after being selected the NHL's coach of the year.

Nolan then spent two seasons coaching the New York Islanders and led them to the playoffs in 2006-07, before being fired after the following season.

Aside from the Sabres, Nolan enjoyed a successful stint at the Sochi Games, where he coached Latvia to an eighth-place finish - the country's best in five Olympic appearances.

## **Next step: Improve roster Murray impressed by coach's work**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 31, 2014

While watching Ted Nolan eke out overtime appearances with an overmatched hockey club, Sabres General Manager Tim Murray realized the coach should stick around Buffalo for three more years. Murray also noticed the most obvious truth of all.

“We have to get him better players,” Murray said Monday while announcing Nolan’s contract extension. “It doesn’t take a genius to figure that out.”

The Sabres’ hockey department, once the definition of stability, is on solid ground once again with Murray and Nolan in place. The next step for the GM is giving Nolan an NHL-caliber team to coach. It won’t be in place tonight when New Jersey visits First Niagara Center, but the sides share a vision of what kind of players should be on the team.

It’s up to Murray to bring them in, to show them Buffalo is a worthy landing spot.

“This is the first step,” Murray said after removing the interim tag Nolan had worn since November. “Free agents want to go to a team that has a chance to win, so we have to change that. No. 2, obviously, they like stability. They like to think that the people in charge can change that if you’re not there yet.

“We have players here that were drafted or signed before him and I both got here. Some of them are NHL players, so we’re going to go forward with those guys. There’s some good young talent in the organization that I certainly had nothing to do with. He has had something to do with it because he’s got his hands on them between five games and 20 games, so he has had an impact on those guys.

“We’re going to draft high this year. We’ve made trades for young guys already, so going forward we’re going to have a different group in here at some point.”

Nolan is looking forward to the day when the words “30th place” and “Sabres” are not synonymous.

“When you have good players, it makes the game so much easier,” Nolan said in First Niagara Center. “You look at some of the teams we play and just their hockey intelligence gets them out of a lot of trouble. In order to have good players where we are, we have to develop those players, too, so I’m looking forward to that.

“Through Tim’s experience in finding that talent, it’ll make my job a lot easier. The only thing I’ll have to worry about is coaching and knowing that you’re going to be receiving some really good players.”

There aren't many Sabres assured of sticking around, but those who are enjoyed the news of Nolan's contract extension.

"He's been a tremendous coach so far," rookie Zemgus Girgensons said. "When you come in midseason it's hard to get everything together, but I think he's done a pretty good job of getting guys together and working hard and getting them mentally prepared. I think just the next three years, we're going to improve every year."

The players also like the renewed feeling of stability. The roster has been a mix of callups, acquisitions and waiver claims, while the front office and coaching staff have turned over like a restless sleeper.

"We've been feeling like the 'Land of Misfit Toys' here at times," defenseman Mike Weber said. "It's a good first step by upstairs to try to straighten the ship here and get a little bit of stability. We know who the guy's going to be now for the next three years, and that's a good sign."

Nolan was set to sign the extension in February before the chaos erupted involving the departure of Pat LaFontaine, his friend and president of hockey operations. Nolan took a break to reassess the matter, and the contract has been in the hands of his agent for weeks.

"It was more the circumstances of the time than the want of getting it done," said Nolan, who will assess his coaching staff after the season. "What makes the job so exciting is looking down the road. What we have now is what we have now, but you see some chunks of coal here. You polish them up, they're going to be some pretty good diamonds."

Murray determined through observation and conversation that he had the right guy to polish them.

"He's been in a lot of situations here that haven't been great, and a lot of nights I've liked the way our team competed," the GM said. "I like his back and forth with young players. I like his teaching with young players. I like patience with young players. We're not all going to be young. Our veteran guys like playing for him, too, so that's not pigeon-holing him as a young-guy coach."

"In a losing situation, I have liked what I've seen."

The job now is to make it a winning situation.

## **Nolan's deal is a victory for honesty**

By Bucky Gleason

Buffalo News

March 31, 2014

Ted Nolan was asked after signing his contract extension Monday why he connected so well with Buffalo and its fans. The Sabres coach, back for another twirl, mentioned how he came from the same type of background as the people here. He effectively slipped communal buzzwords such as “work” and “blue-collar” and “effort” into his message.

“If you’re honest with them, that’s the key,” Nolan said. “You can’t lie. You can’t fluff things that aren’t there. If you’re truthful and straightforward, they appreciate it that much more.”

Ah, yes, honesty.

Now, there’s a novel concept that’s been foreign to the organization. It’s been absent for so long that it’s become difficult to decipher fact from fiction even when people speak the truth. The Sabres for years made a habit of bending, twisting and fabricating the facts. They made Pinocchio look like Porky Pig.

It goes back to Nolan’s first stint in Buffalo, which ended with him essentially getting kicked out the door. Yes, I know he rejected a one-year contract offer, but let’s not get into semantics. They offered him a lousy deal that they knew he wouldn’t accept and basically pushed him out the door.

In other words, they fired him.

It continued with Pat LaFontaine. My intention is not to rehash LaFontaine’s firing – oops, I mean resignation – so much as make a point about Nolan. LaFontaine is gone, but the man he hired to coach the Sabres is still here. He may not speak the truth every single time because he is, after all, in professional sports.

In Nolan, however, fans have someone they can trust. We’ll see about Tim Murray, who gets the benefit of the doubt until proven otherwise. I’ve been inclined to watch what the Sabres do rather than listen to what they say, a residual effect from previous regimes and validated by current executives.

Nolan and Murray have an opportunity to turn suspicion into belief, however. They passed their first test together Monday when they answered a few simple questions about Nolan’s contract extension, which alone could be construed as a sign of progress.

One, Nolan confirmed that it’s a three-year deal. That may not seem like a major revelation. It’s standard length. It had been rumored for weeks before the Sabres

made it official. Darcy Regier and Lindy Ruff treated their contracts like state secrets. It backfired for Regier when it was revealed he received a golden parachute from Tom Golisano, which essentially allowed him to survive the ownership change. Terry Pegula trumped that blunder with another deal that was kept quiet until it eventually emerged and led to more mistrust.

Two, Nolan's contract doesn't include a confidentiality clause. Knowing Nolan, it wasn't a surprise. It's hard to fathom him ever allowing money to become bigger than his voice, bigger than his soul. Knowing the Sabres, it was surprising. They have silenced others, notably LaFontaine.

Sabres fans can take comfort knowing Nolan is big on the truth. It's how he handles himself in public and how he handles players. He doesn't mince words or massage the language. His message is clear. Young players especially need to hear the truth from their coach because they may not from anyone else.

Honesty works. In fact, it will help his players improve. Someday, if all goes well and they continue to develop, they might even look like an NHL team rather than a bunch of rich kids playing for Moose Jaw.

Another truth is that the Murray needed Nolan on many fronts if the organization planned to move forward. Nolan can help the Sabres in terms of hockey and public relations after both turned into simultaneous disasters when LaFontaine was, um, strongly encouraged to use the exit.

In the short term, the extension brings a semblance of stability to an organization on the verge of implosion. To review, the Sabres were going to win a Stanley Cup in three years under Ruff, who supposedly was never getting fired before getting fired. Then, it was Regier being allowed to clean up a mess he created. Then it was LaFontaine running the show before getting run from the show.

Nolan has a history of inspiring people around him, particularly young players. He's a passionate guy who spent an abundance of time and energy this season establishing his own credibility and approach on the fly. Now that he's staying, he can build on this season. Every returning player will know what to expect when training camp rolls around.

The extension also relieves sting from the LaFontaine debacle. LaFontaine was popular around town. He appeared to be moving in the right direction before he was undermined, or he undermined others, depending on what you believe. For what it's worth, the former appears far more likely.

Nolan is another popular figure. If he would have split, it would have equated to another layer of dysfunction and more discontent toward a franchise already teetering on irrelevance. Nolan staying is one step among many needed if the organization is to reverse course.

Nolan and Murray appear to be a good match. They share a similar no-nonsense approach. Murray arrived with an objective view and has shown little patience for drama or hurt feelings. He has a way of being porky, witty and charming at the same time, which is attractive to a frustrated fan base.

Murray was quick to acknowledge the daily challenges forced upon Nolan this season. He took over a terrible team. LaFontaine suddenly fell out of favor. His star goaltender and captain were traded. The losses piled up. Still, he was impressed with Nolan after seeing how players responded to him.

“I don’t know if there was one ‘eureka!’ moment,” Murray said. “It has taken some time for all of us to get to know everybody. I’ve been watching closely. The positives far outweigh the negatives. I got to a point that I wanted him back and I wanted him to be our head coach.”

After years of watching an organization snow fans who were desperate to believe anything, their partnership via LaFontaine is a refreshing change. They’re looking for the same qualities that fans appreciate, particularly in Buffalo. They want talented players who give a full effort.

They want good, honest players. In these parts, honesty works.

## **Leino expected back in lineup**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 31, 2014

Ville Leino was sitting at his locker stall, getting ready to play Nashville on Thursday, when he started feeling woozy. Despite not even going on the ice yet, the Sabres forward felt like he got his bell rung.

“Those symptoms were like concussion-wise,” Leino said Monday. “You’re feeling woozy, not focused and just kind of out of your head a little bit.”

Leino ended up playing just 58 seconds and missed the next two days of practice with his mysterious ailment, which is believed to have been an ocular migraine.

“It’s something to do with your eyes and you started seeing lights and shapes, and your eyes have a delay,” Leino said. “It took me a couple days. I couldn’t really focus much because your eyes are delayed, so you talk to someone and you don’t realize you’re talking to him because your eyes fall away.

“This is the first time I ever had it. It’s a weird feeling, but I’m feeling better now.”

Leino should be ready to return to the lineup tonight when Buffalo hosts New Jersey in First Niagara Center.

“There’s no issues,” Leino said. “It kind of goes away, and I’ve been feeling better every day.”

...

Rookie left wing Nicolas Deslauriers skipped practice Monday to be with his wife, who was giving birth. It’s not clear whether he’ll rejoin the team today.

The Sabres worked out with 12 forwards. Tyler Ennis centered for left wing Cory Conacher and right Drew Stafford, Zemgus Girgensons was in the middle of Cody Hodgson and Brian Flynn, Johan Larsson was flanked by Marcus Foligno and Matt D’Agostini, while Leino skated alongside Matt Ellis and John Scott.

Tyler Myers (midsection), Zenon Konopka (back), Torrey Mitchell (undisclosed) and goaltenders Jhonas Enroth (leg) and Michal Neuvirth (lower body) did not practice due to injury.

...

Sabres prospect Mikhail Grigorenko joined the Amerks for practice and will play Wednesday when Rochester hosts Syracuse. He played two playoff games for the Amerks last season.

“This year is going to be better for me than last year because I have two, three weeks to be more part of the team,” he said. “I really have a chance to help the guys.”

The Amerks could use the assistance. They are 0-7-2 in their last nine and have fallen out of a playoff spot. They have nine games left.

“Hopefully, it’ll be a good jumpstart for us,” Amerks coach Chadd Cassidy said. “Obviously, he brings in a lot of offensive ability. We’ve had a hard time scoring goals, and every little bit helps.”

Grigorenko started this season with the Sabres but was sent to his junior team in Quebec shortly after Ted Nolan and Pat LaFontaine took over in November. The 19-year-old views this as an audition for the coach and General Manager Tim Murray.

“I think it’s a good opportunity for me,” Grigorenko said. “I’ll do my best and show the new general manager and Ted Nolan that I can step to the NHL next year.”

## **Sabres try to play spoiler against Devils**

By Mike G. Morreale

NHL.com

April 1, 2014

DEVILS (32-28-15) at SABRES (20-45-9)

TV: MSG, MSG-B, BELL TV

Last 10: New Jersey 4-4-2; Buffalo 1-8-1

Season series: The third and final game between the New Jersey Devils and Buffalo Sabres. Matt D'Agostini scored with 8:11 remaining in the third period to give the Sabres a 2-1 victory on Jan. 4 to even the season series.

Big story: The Devils kept alive their hope of qualifying for the Stanley Cup Playoffs on Monday following a 6-3 victory against the Florida Panthers at Prudential Center. The Devils trail the Columbus Blue Jackets by three points for the second of two wild-card spots in the Eastern Conference. The Devils have played one more game than the Blue Jackets.

"We needed to have this game [against Florida]," Devils goalie Cory Schneider said. "We couldn't afford to lose it. It was sort of heading south there in the second, but we found a way and didn't let it get to us. We got challenged between the second and third and responded in the third. Now it's on to the next one."

The Sabres announced Monday they have removed the interim tag from Ted Nolan and signed him to a three-year contract extension to be the full-time coach. Nolan was named interim coach Nov. 13 following the firing of coach Ron Rolston and general manager Darcy Regier.

Buffalo is 16-30-8 under Nolan after a 4-15-1 start.

"I'm really excited about going with the next step forward and helping shape this team into a very competitive team and a team that will hopefully one day battle for a championship," Nolan said.

Team Scope:

Devils: New Jersey improved to 2-0-2 since being shut out by the New York Rangers on March 22 after the victory on Monday. Travis Zajac scored the first hat trick by a Devils player this season and the first of his career. Jaromir Jagr had a goal and three assists and Ryane Clowe, who was forced to exit the game late in the second after taking a big hit along the boards, had a goal and two assists.

Devils coach Peter DeBoer didn't announce his starting goalie against the Sabres after the game, but Schneider did stop all 13 shots in relief. Martin Brodeur was pulled 6:35 into the second after yielding three goals on nine shots, marking the second time this season that Brodeur was pulled in favor of Schneider.

"I don't blame [Brodeur] for any of the first three goals; we just needed a wakeup call and didn't feel a timeout would be enough of a jolt for us," DeBoer said. "Those are tough decisions to make because he wasn't at fault. Schneider came in and shut the door, so the move had the desired effect."

Sabres: Buffalo has lost 11 of 13 games. Center Zemgus Girgensons returned to the lineup Saturday in a 4-3 overtime loss to the Tampa Bay Lightning after missing the past 11 games with a lower-body injury. Playing on a line with left wing Cody Hodgson and Brian Flynn, Girgensons earned 15:05 of ice time and took five shots. The line of Hodgson, Girgensons, and Flynn provided good energy against the Lightning.

"The effort was there," Nolan told the Sabres website. "You look at certain things, and I thought Cody Hodgson played a tremendous game; that was one of his better games since I've been here. The bright light of Girgensons back in the lineup, and [Rasmus] Ristolainen too. Looking forward, you're starting to see bright lights."

Who's hot: Devils forward Adam Henrique has 11 goals and 16 points in the past 16 games since the Olympic break.

Injury report: Devils defensemen Jon Merrill (face) and Bryce Salvador (undisclosed) and forward Clowe (upper body) are questionable. Forward Stephen Gionta (lower body) and defenseman Anton Volchenkov (lower body) are day-to-day. ... The Sabres are without forwards Chris Stewart (ankle), Torrey Mitchell (lower body) and Zenon Konopka (back) and defensemen Alexander Sulzer (upper body) and Tyler Myers (upper body) and goalies Michal Neuvirth (lower body) and Jhonas Enroth (leg). Forward Ville Leino (head) is doubtful.

**Devils preview: Tuesday, April 1 at Sabres**

Bergen Record

April 1, 2014

Devils at Sabres

Today, 7 p.m.

TV: MSG. Radio: WBBR-AM 1130

Story line: The Devils have lost their past three games in Buffalo (0-1-2), including a 2-1 defeat on Jan. 4. The Sabres (20-45-9) are last overall with only 49 points and are 0-3-1 in their past four games.

## **Respect shown to players helped Ted Nolan earn contract extension from Sabres: 'You don't want to let him down'**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

April 1, 2014

BUFFALO – Drew Stafford's first conversation with Sabres coach Ted Nolan lasted no more than two minutes, the winger said. It was a straightforward, "man-to-man" chat.

"Looking-at-me-in-the-eyes kind of conversation," Stafford said Monday, hours after the Sabres removed Nolan's interim tag and gave him a three-year contract extension.

Stafford was struggling badly back in mid-November. He had one goal and had just lost his alternate captaincy. Nolan didn't care. As a veteran, Stafford deserved respect. Nolan immediately upped his ice time.

"Just that kind of a respect knowing, 'OK, I'm going to get this opportunity and he's going to give me this chance,' I grabbed it," Stafford said inside the First Niagara Center after the Sabres prepared for tonight's game against the New Jersey Devils.

Today, Stafford's a reliable, first-line power forward. He has the 'A' back on his jersey. People talk about the 28-year-old becoming the next captain of the rebuilding club.

"He has that relationship with you where you don't want to let him down," Stafford said about Nolan.

Yes, the Sabres are still the NHL's worst team. They're 16-30-8 since Nolan replaced Ron Rolston on Nov. 13 and have lost 12 of their last 14 games.

But Scotty Bowman probably wouldn't win much with the team's current roster.

Nolan has changed the culture around the Sabres, an important first step in what could be a years-long rebuild. He connects with players young and old and demands effort.

"All I've heard is positives," Sabres general manager Tim Murray said about Nolan.

Stafford added: "I love playing under (Nolan). He's a guy that I think is perfect for this type of rebuild as far as motivation and making sure the right guys are staying around."

For Nolan, who also coached the Sabres from 1995-97, Buffalo is a special place.

“If I could pick a place to go, this would definitely be the place,” he said. “I’m excited to be here. This is a city that deserves a championship.”

Murray has been watching Nolan closely since his Jan. 9 arrival.

“In trying times, I’ve liked a lot of what I’ve seen,” Murray said.

The Sabres compete most nights, he said. Murray likes Nolan’s rapport with the youngsters and his popularity with the veterans.

Sabres center Tyler Ennis said Nolan offers stability.

“I think everybody’s just excited to kind of just move forward,” said Ennis, who has thrived under Nolan. “I think Teddy’s been awesome for us. There’s been so many changes this last little while.”

With their coach in place, the Sabres can go forward overhauling the roster.

“Do we like the same type of players?” Murray asked. “I think we do.”

Nolan added: “We like competitive people. If you haven’t got them, you don’t win.”

The future of Nolan’s assistant coaches will be discussed later, he said.

Despite the Sabres’ sorry state, the job is still attractive, Nolan said. The team possesses some coveted prospects and has a slew of high picks in the coming drafts.

“What makes the job so exciting is looking down the road,” he said. “What we have now is what we have now. You see some chunks of coal here and polish them up, they’re going to be some pretty good diamonds down the road.”

He added: “I really believe you got to go through those rough waters in order for those smooth waters to come.”

The deal, rumored to be close for weeks, was finalized Monday because with Pat LaFontaine’s March 1 resignation as president of hockey operations and the NHL trade deadline four days later, Murray and Nolan figured it was better to put the contract on the backburner.

It took about three weeks or a month to complete, Nolan said.

Now, the popular Nolan is really back in a city he “fell in love with” 19 years ago. Clearly, Nolan and the locals share a bond. Some fans never got over Nolan

essentially getting fired after winning the 1996-97 Jack Adams Award for top coach.

Why does Nolan identify with the people here?

“I come from the same type of background,” he said. “Nothing was given to myself. You had to work for things. And this city, it’s a blue-collar town. They love to work, and if you give them an honest effort, you’re honest with them, that’s a key. You can’t lie. You can’t fluff things out that are not there.

“I think if you’re truthful and you’re straightforward, they appreciate much more. I try to be as straightforward as I can with the players.”

That has earned Nolan respect.

“He’s a great person on top of a great coach,” Ennis said. “I think that’s another reason everyone’s excited for him because he’s a good human being.”

## **Is Ted Nolan right for the Sabres' rebuild?**

By Matthew Collier

WGR 550

March 31, 2014

Talk about a 180.

Last off-season the Buffalo Sabres hired a coach whose background was in player development. They decided Ron Rolston's ability to reach young players would help them reach their long term goals. Owner Terry Pegula bailed on that idea just 20 games into the season and opted to give an Old Hockey Coach a try.

On Monday, General Manager Tim Murray and Pegula signed Ted Nolan to a three-year agreement to remain behind the bench.

How can we tell whether the new plan will work or if we'll be talking about the next coach 20 games into 2014-15?

You could compare the results to Rolston and try to draw conclusions about how he performed with the same club, but shoe doesn't exactly fit. The Sabres changed philosophy with coaches, sending prospects to Rochester or junior such as first-round picks Rasmus Ristolainen, Nikita Zadorov and Mikhail Grigorenko. They brought up Matt Ellis and claimed Matt D'Agostini off waivers. Naturally, the veterans showed a little more wherewithal

You could compare wins and losses or goals for vs. goals against or puck possession - but you won't find a huge gap in those things either. Rolston's era - between the end of last year and this season - finished with a .431 point percentage. Nolan, since taking over, has a .370 point percentage.

\*Sabres Fenwick Close (puck possession) chart for the entire season. See much difference from start to end?\*

You could compare effort, hustle, heart, grit. But...how can you do that? If none of the actual results are different, if some players are better and some are worse, if they still are not good, how can you really say?

Comparing him to Rolston is simply a faulty approach - especially if you're aiming to support a particular narrative.

We can only take what we know about his motivational tactics and strategical skills.

We have heard from current and former players alike that Nolan was loved in the locker room - and their anecdotes have been sold more than those Taco Bell breakfast sandwiches during March Madness. Ironic when the team just inducted

the best player in its history to the Hall of Fame - one who questioned Nolan's judgement.

That does not dismiss all the success stories or the fact that he won the Jack Adams Award for Coach of the Year. It only should leave you questioning the pitch.

You should question whether Drew Stafford is really better or just returned to being who he is. Same with Tyler Ennis. It should make you wonder where Cody Hodgson went or whether Marcus Foligno will ever reach his ceiling. Tyler Myers has been better at times, but even acknowledged that he started a personal reconstruction weeks before the November Change.

At best, you could all the player-to-player results inconclusive. Most of the players flat-out lack talent or motivation and there is little any coach could do. That was kind of the point of the roster's build to begin with, right?

If we can not exactly tell from results or players' progression, how about Nolan's decision making? Logic is logic, whether it is with banging two rocks together or building a spaceship.

There have been ups and downs here. On the plus side:

- Moving Zemgus Girgensons to center. He belonged there all along and compares to some of the league's best two-way centers in a long-term projection.
- Playing Cody Hodgson at wing to protect some of his defensive shortcomings
- Asking Tyler Myers to carry the puck more.
- Playing Jhonas Enroth more while Ryan Miller was still in Buffalo
- Attempting to give younger player like Girgensons offensive zone time
- Not fighting a bunch for no reason

On the not-so positive side:

- John Scott on defense
- Using Zenon Kenopka for important Dzone faceoffs. In the 30 seconds following a Dzone faceoff, Kenopka, no matter how good at them, has an awful 17% Corsi percentage.
- Having Hodgson face the No. 1 Quality of Competition

There is probably more good than bad. In the future, he won't have to use Kenopka in Dzone faceoffs or Scott on D or Hodgson vs. top competition. But will he use another "faceoff specialist" who isn't good at actually playing the game after the puck is dropped? It's all yet to be seen.

When Nolan was asked at his press conference about strategy and philosophy, he simply said he wants players to compete. A refrain that, like other things, will be fine until the strategy matters.

The fact of the situation is that we will not know what type of coach Nolan really is until he has a good enough roster for the team to compete. Even if some prospects succeed or fail, we will not know whether it was his fault or other factors. If the team is terrible next year, we still won't know because it seems that is the plan.

So how should you feel about Nolan signing on for the next three years? You should feel good for him. He cares about the city, appreciates it and takes every opportunity to thank the people of Buffalo and fans. He strikes you as a man who cares about - and understands - other people and wants everyone to care about winning as much as he does (and did when he played).

Those are all traits to appreciate.

And until Nolan has a good group, that should be the approach. Through the next year-plus, appreciate that he is happy to be here and look for tea leaves to read. Then when the time comes - maybe three years from now - can can decide whether he is the right guy to lead this team to a Stanley Cup.

## **Sabres announce extension for Nolan**

WGR 550

March 31, 2014

The Buffalo Sabres announced Monday morning that they have agreed to a contract extension with coach Ted Nolan.

Nolan coaches the Sabres for two seasons in 1995-96 and 1996-97, then he was hired again in November after the organization parted ways with GM Darcy Regier and coach Ron Rolston.

“We are very happy to get this deal done and have Ted Nolan as our permanent head coach going forward,” GM Tim Murray said per release. “Teddy has proven time and again that he is an exceptional leader, motivator and teacher. He is exactly what we need in a head coach for our hockey team and we’re confident in his ability to guide our players and turn this team around.”

The Sabres' coach won the Jack Adams Award in 1997.

“I said back in November that it was a dream to be able to come back and coach the Sabres and that’s still true today,” Nolan said. “Hockey is my life and Buffalo is a special place for hockey. I’m excited by the challenge facing our team and our organization and I’m truly thankful to have this opportunity.”

The deal is for a reported three years.

## **PLAYERS HAPPY TO SEE NOLAN SIGN CONTRACT**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 31, 2014

The players in the Buffalo Sabres dressing room were happy to hear that coach Ted Nolan had signed a contract extension and that the interim label had been removed from his title.

Tyler Ennis and Drew Stafford are two players that have played well since Nolan took over. They combined for four goals and seven assists in the 20 games prior to Nolan's arrival but have been Buffalo's most consistent offensive weapons, especially since the start of the new calendar year.

During an 11-game stretch from March 3 to March 23, they combined for 15 points (10+5).

"I obviously feel like I've flourished playing under him," Stafford said after practice at First Niagara Center. "I love playing under him and he's a guy that I think is perfect for this type of rebuild.

"He understands what guys are going through and the right buttons to push, whether or not to be hard or soft on certain guys. There's not a lot of complicated things that he brings up. It's very, very straightforward, very simple. He wants you to compete and show up and not take this for granted, any opportunity that you're up here."

Ennis started the season on the wing but has developed into the team's top center under Nolan's watch. Nolan has helped him get back on his game.

"I think he's just brought back a little bit more competitiveness and a little bit more confidence that I had in the past years," he said. "I kind of was slumping there a little bit before he came in and he's helped me out a lot."

Ennis currently leads the team in goals and points. He has 19 goals – just on the cusp of his second-career 20-goal season – and 38 points.

"He gave me confidence and told me, 'Don't be a robot out there. Go out and play your game. You're creative but play hard,'" Ennis said. "It's kind of my game right there is to be offensive and creative but at the same time kind of play with a little edge. He's kind of let me do that. "

Nolan has tried to instill a message that everything on the ice must be earned and that includes not only goals and wins, but ice time as well.

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Ville Leino was pulled from the team's game in Nashville on Thursday after feeling light-headed during his first shift. He underwent further testing and did not play Saturday night at home against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

He was back on the ice for practice on Monday and said afterward that he was diagnosed with a type of migraine.

"Your eyes have a delay so it took me a couple of days. I couldn't really focus much," Leino said. "Your eyes are delayed, so you talk to someone and you don't realize you're talking to him because your eyes fall away. It's a weird feeling but I'm feeling better now."

Leino said he didn't feel well before the game, but when it didn't pass during his first shift, he was taken into the dressing room for testing.

"I knew it just a couple minutes before the game but sometimes you have feeling like that and they just go away. But this time, they stuck through during the game and it's a little worrying," he said. "I wanted to go back to try one more shift but the trainers said not to go because you're going delayed. So if somebody hits you, you might not even feel it. Something bad might happen so it was better to stay out."

Leino said he doesn't anticipate any further issues and that he should be ready to play Tuesday night when the Sabres host the New Jersey Devils at 7 p.m.

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Goaltenders Jhonas Enroth and Michal Neuvirth, defensemen Tyler Myers and Alexander Sulzer and forwards Chris Stewart, Zenon Konopka and Torrey Mitchell all did not practice as they are recovering from various injuries.

Rookie forward Nicolas Deslauriers did not practice for unspecified reasons.

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88 Cory Conacher – 63 Tyler Ennis – 21 Drew Stafford  
19 Cody Hodgson – 28 Zemgus Girgensons – 65 Brian Flynn  
82 Marcus Foligno – 22 Johan Larsson – 27 Matt D'Agostini  
32 John Scott – 37 Matt Ellis – 23 Ville Leino

10 Christian Ehrhoff – 55 Rasmus Ristolainen  
6 Mike Weber – 4 Jamie McBain  
20 Henrik Tallinder – 5 Chad Ruhwedel

31 Matt Hackett  
50 Nathan Lieuwen

## **SABRES PROSPECTS REPORT**

By Kris Baker

Sabres.com

March 31, 2014

### **NCAA**

Hudson Fasching (2013, fourth round) recorded three shots on goal Sunday as Minnesota advanced to the 2014 NCAA Tournament Frozen Four with a 4-0 shutout of St. Cloud State. On Saturday, Fasching scored from the edge of the crease as the Gophers opened the tourney with a 7-3 victory over Robert Morris. Fasching's marker, which snapped a personal six-game goal drought, gives the freshman winger 29 points (13+16) in 38 games heading into Minnesota's national semifinal tilt with North Dakota on Thursday, Apr. 10 (8:30 pm ET, ESPN2).

On Friday, Jake McCabe (2012, second round) logged a minus-four rating as Wisconsin was bounced from the NCAA Tournament Midwest Regional with a 5-2 loss to North Dakota. A competent two-way defender, McCabe completes the campaign with career bests of eight goals and 25 points in 36 games for the Badgers.

Wisconsin winger Brad Navin (2011, seventh round) received limited work in the Badgers' loss to North Dakota. The third-year man amassed nine points (4+5) this season while functioning in mostly a checking line role.

Anthony Florentino (2013, fifth round) scored his fifth goal of the season Friday as Providence advanced to the NCAA Tournament East Regional Final with a 4-0 victory over Quinnipiac. Florentino's marker came off a wrist shot from the left point that sailed through a maze of bodies to put the Friars up 2-0 in the game's 26th minute. Florentino, who saw his freshman season come to an end Saturday in a 3-1 loss to Union, finishes the year with five goals and 11 points, while leading all Friars rearguards with a plus-12 rating.

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### **OHL**

Nikita Zadorov (2013, first round) jumped into the shorthanded rush and beat a defender one-on-one to score his third goal of the playoffs Tuesday as London rolled Windsor 10-2 in Game 3 of their OHL Western Conference Quarterfinal. The hard-shooting Russian, who on Thursday was unable to get on the scoresheet as the Knights closed out the series with a 4-3 victory, posted five points (3+2) in the four-game set. London will square off with Guelph in a Western Conference Semifinal starting Friday.

Brady Austin (2012, seventh round) scored his first goal of the playoffs and added an assist as London bested Windsor 4-3 to sweep the first round series in four

games. Austin finished the first-round series with three points (1+2) and a plus-three rating.

Justin Kea (2012, third round) capped his strong playoff performance Thursday with a goal and an assist as Saginaw saw their season come to an end with a 3-2 overtime loss to Erie in Game 5 of the OHL Western Conference Quarterfinal. Kea rode his size and skating skill to gather four points (1+3) in the series while drawing one of the toughest defensive assignments in junior hockey.

Saginaw captain Eric Locke (2013, seventh round) scored his second goal of the playoffs Monday as the Spirit earned a wild 7-6 overtime victory over Erie in Game 3 of their first round set. Locke completed the playoffs with five points (2+3) as Saginaw was ousted in five games.

Following a 45-goal, 89-point regular season, Nicholas Baptiste (2013, third round) finished the postseason as a point-per-game producer as Sudbury was eliminated by Barrie in five games. The speedy winger collected a goal and two helpers Tuesday in the Wolves' Game 3 loss. On Thursday, Baptiste collected two assists as Sudbury kept their playoff hopes alive with a 2-1 victory. Sudbury was blanked 7-0 on Friday to end the year in disappointing fashion.

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#### QMJHL

Mikhail Grigorenko (2012, first round) scored his first goal of the playoffs Wednesday as Quebec suffered a 4-1 loss to Rouyn-Noranda in Game 4 of their first round series. The playmaking pivot got his final licks in Friday with two assists as Quebec was eliminated with a 6-2 defeat. Grigorenko contributed one goal and eight helpers in the five-game series loss. Grigorenko was assigned to the AHL's Rochester Americans on Sunday.

William Carrier (2013, second round) missed the final three contests with a lower body injury as Drummondville advanced to the QMJHL quarterfinal round with a 5-4 win over Victoriaville in Game Five of the best-of-seven tilt. The Voltigeurs move on to face Val-d'Or in round two.

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#### WHL

Logan Nelson connected for a goal and an assist as Victoria earned a 4-2 win over Spokane to sweep the first-round Western Conference series. Nelson collected goals in three straight games and a total of five points after being a late scratch for the series opener. The Royals will face Portland in a second-round matchup beginning Friday.

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## USHL

In Saturday action, Judd Peterson (2012, seventh round) scored the game-winning goal as Cedar Rapids got past Youngstown 4-1. The tally, Peterson's first since Jan. 29, gives the St. Cloud State commit 16 goals and 30 points in 45 games.

Connor Hurley (2013, second round) notched five points in the week's three games as Green Bay picked up a pair of wins. Hurley's week, which began with a three-assist outing Friday in the Gamblers' 4-3 victory over Lincoln, has 34 points (10+24) in 33 games since being dealt to Green Bay, with 14 of his 24 assists coming on the power play.

Cal Petersen (2013, fifth round) made 30 saves Sunday to capture his 50th career regular season victory as Waterloo held on for a 4-3 win over Green Bay. The 19-year old netminder had won just two of his previous 10 starts for the Black Hawks, who have clinched the top spot in the Western Conference with two games left to play.

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

## **NOLAN FORGES AHEAD WITHOUT INTERIM LABEL**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 31, 2014

Ted Nolan seemed as enthusiastic Monday morning as he did the day he took the Buffalo Sabres coaching position on an interim basis. He'll be behind the bench for the next three seasons without that interim label.

The team announced Monday morning that Nolan had signed a contract extension and that he is now – and once again – the full-time coach. Nolan and general manager Tim Murray addressed the media after the team's practice on Monday at First Niagara Center.

Nolan re-joined the Sabres on Nov. 13. He previously coached the team to a 73-72-19 record during the 1995-96 and 1996-97 seasons. He became the franchise's first Jack Adams Award winner following a first-place Northeast Division finish in 1997.

“One of the things I mentioned when I first got here was if I could pick a place to go, this would definitely be the place and I'm excited about being here,” Nolan said. “If there's a city that deserves a championship, this is the one so hopefully through Tim's knowledge and getting us the right players, and hopefully I can coach them good enough to win, that's what it's all about.”

Nolan later spent two seasons as head coach of the New York Islanders, guiding the Islanders to a 74-68-21 record during the 2006-07 and 2007-08 seasons. He has a 163-170-48 overall record in 381 NHL games coached.

He thanked owners Terry and Kim Pegula for the opportunity as well as former president of hockey operations Pat LaFontaine for bringing him in on an interim basis.

Nolan confirmed that the deal is for three years and that getting the contract signed had been three weeks to a month in the making. He said he always wanted to sign a new contract but it was put off due to the NHL Trade Deadline and other factors.

“I would've signed it probably on that spot because I was so excited about being here,” he said. “But I'm just really thankful that we got it done.”

Murray said he checks in all the time on the atmosphere in the locker room, including before and after both practices and games to get a read on how the players feel about Nolan and what the interactions between the players and coaching staff are like.

“He’s been in a lot of situations here that haven’t been great and a lot of nights, I liked the way our team competed,” Murray said. “We have to get him better players. In some games we hang on in get a shootout loss or something like that. I think with better players and the way he coaches, we’ll get a better result. But in trying times, I’ve liked a lot of what I’ve seen and I’ve watched closely.”

Murray praised Nolan’s ability to work with younger players and how he provides them multiple opportunities as they try to develop consistency at the NHL level. While Nolan has done a lot to help the development of those young players Murray will also look to have a good veteran presence on the roster moving forward.

“We’re not all going to be young. Our veteran guys like playing for him too, so let’s not pigeonhole him as a young guy coach or something like that,” he said. “In a losing situation, I have liked what I’ve seen.”

It’s been a difficult season for the Sabres as they currently sit in last place in the League and have already been eliminated from postseason contention. There are still eight games left in the season and the evaluation process continues to find out which players the organization will look to move ahead with.

Nolan believes that things won’t get an easier soon, but that they’re on the right path.

“We went through a lot of tough times and we’re going to go through a little bit more tough times. I really believe you’ve gotta go through those rough waters in order for the smooth waters to come,” he said. “Just because we got this deal done today, we’re not going to get to the smooth waters. It’s going to take a little time to really turn this thing around.

“In order to turn it around, it’s going to take some time, it’s going to take some patience, it’s going to take some understanding and it’s going to take some time for the young guys to mature.”

Nolan is looking forward to a “good partnership” that will also involve other members of the hockey department. Nolan is the third coach the Sabres have had in the past two seasons. Removing the interim tag and signing Nolan to a contract extension represents a big step in starting to shape the organization in the vision of Murray and Nolan and also brings consistency behind the bench.

“No. 1, free agents want to go to teams that have a chance to win. So we have to change that. No. 2, obviously, they like stability, they like to think the people that are in charge can change it if you’re not there yet,” Murray said. “We will be a destination for certain players that are looking to play higher than were they’re playing now and they have to believe that by playing here that we can get better. I think this is the start of it for sure.”

As far as the assistant coaching staff goes, Nolan said he'll have discussions with Murray after the season ends regarding those positions.

Right now, the Sabres could have as many as five first-round selections in the next two NHL Drafts. They could also have as many as six second-round picks in the next three drafts. Rookies like Zemgus Girgensons and Rasmus Ristolainen have already made an impact and with more talented young players waiting in the wings, Nolan sees this opportunity as a very enticing one.

“What makes the job so exciting is looking down the road,” he said. “What we have now is what we have now but you see some chunks of coal here and you polish them up, they're going to be some pretty good diamonds down the road.”

Nolan believes that he and Murray have a good idea of the types of players they want in the organization. It starts with hard-working players and those that want to give a solid effort every day both on and off the ice.

“Tim's pretty straight-forward and I'm pretty straight forward, too. I think what we both like is, we like competitive people,” Nolan said. “We want competitive people. If you haven't got them, you don't win. We can be as fancy as we want, but if you haven't got that compete and you haven't got people that play with a certain amount of passion, you're not going to do it. So I think that's where we agree 100 percent.”

## **Enroth to visit students at Sweet Home**

By Emily Lenihan

WIVB

March 31, 2014

AMHERST, N.Y. (WIVB) - Local students who made a pledge to stay safe on the roads are getting a visit from Sabres Goaltender Jhonas Enroth. The school won a contest run by AT&T, which encouraged students to pledge not to text while driving.

Three weeks ago, members of Sweet Home's ice hockey team enjoyed a special skate with Sabres Center Cody Hodgson at First Niagara Center.

Hodgson and Enroth filled in for Former Captain Steve Ott, who was traded before he could meet the winning students.