



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Sabres-Flyers Preview

Associated Press

April 5, 2014

Stuck in an ill-timed rut, the Philadelphia Flyers could use another strong performance against the Buffalo Sabres more than ever.

The Flyers will seek to give their playoff hopes a boost and avoid their longest losing streak in three seasons when they face the team with the league's worst record Sunday night.

Philadelphia (39-29-9) is 1-4-2 in its last seven games after a 5-2 loss in Boston on Saturday. The Flyers broke a 165-minute scoreless drought but gave up three goals in the third period en route to their fourth consecutive loss.

They remained two points ahead of idle Columbus for the Metropolitan Division's third and final automatic playoff spot with five games remaining.

"Every game is a must-win," captain Claude Giroux said. "There are a lot of teams behind us trying to make the playoffs. We have played good enough to be in the position we are right now and we can't forget that.

"We have to remember that we are a good team and we are in this position because we did a lot of good things this year."

Giroux has only one point during the four-game skid for Philadelphia, which hasn't lost five in a row since March 31-April 8, 2011.

The Flyers would appear to catch a break with a visit from the team that's guaranteed to finish with the fewest points in the league.

Buffalo (21-47-9) secured that dubious distinction by going 2-12-1 in its last 15. The Sabres have suffered five consecutive road losses while getting limited to six goals following a 3-2 defeat in Detroit on Friday.

Philadelphia has won both meetings this season and seven of the past nine. Matt Read scored twice in a 4-1 victory Nov. 21 - the Flyers' fourth straight at home in the series - and Vincent Lecavalier had the last of his club's three third-period goals in a 4-3 road win Jan. 14.

The Flyers faced the since-traded Ryan Miller and currently injured Jhonas Enroth in Buffalo's net in those two games, but now the Sabres will choose between two goaltenders who have played a combined 24 NHL games. With Enroth and Michal Neuvirth sidelined by lower-body injuries, rookie Nathan Lieuwen made his fourth start in Thursday's loss at St. Louis before Matt Hackett made his fifth of the season Friday.

Hackett stopped 28 shots, including 19 in the final two periods after giving up three goals in the first 15:28 against the Red Wings.

"That was a big game for Matt, especially after the first period and the way he fought back and the way he battled back," coach Ted Nolan said. "That's what we want to see from the team moving forward, who is going to battle and who is going to compete."

With Ray Emery starting Saturday's loss, Philadelphia will likely put Steve Mason back in net. Mason has a 2.00 goals-against average in his last nine starts.

Philadelphia's Scott Hartnell has a team-best four points in the season series but has none in his last four games overall.

The Flyers follow this matchup with a three-game road trip before hosting Carolina in their regular-season finale April 13.

Red Wings hold off Sabres, 3-2

Associated Press

April 4, 2014

DETROIT (AP) -- The Detroit Red Wings experienced a lull after a fast start but got the two points they needed.

Daniel Alfredsson had a goal and an assist and Detroit held off the Buffalo Sabres 3-2 on Friday night for the Red Wings' fourth consecutive win.

Detroit led 3-0 after the first period.

"To me, I thought we started really good, we were all over them," said Red Wings' coach Mike Babcock, who got his 413th win for Detroit, which ties him for the all-time franchise record with Jack Adams.

"I thought suddenly we had some skill and suddenly we were dangling around with the puck and now we had the cute-itis going and then we didn't want to shoot it in the net," he said. "We wanted to pass it one more time and the next thing you know it's game on instead of just doing things simple and hard and right."

Darren Helm and Tomas Jurco also scored for Detroit, which is in the seventh playoff spot in the Eastern Conference, three points ahead of the eighth-place Columbus Blue Jackets. Danny DeKeyser had two assists and Jimmy Howard made 21 saves.

Jamie McBain scored and Nicolas Deslauriers got his first career goal for Buffalo, which has the NHL's worst record. Matt Hackett stopped 28 shots.

"We had nothing to lose. Got the day off tomorrow. Just tried to leave it all on the ice . After the tough start," McBain said.

The Sabres lost in St. Louis 2-1 on Thursday night and didn't get to their hotel in Detroit until 4 a.m. Friday morning.

"We talked about having excuses. We could've had a real good one," Buffalo coach Ted Nolan said. "I think tired is a state of mind. We got in at four this morning and slept in. It wasn't that short of a night."

Deslauriers pulled the Sabres within one at 6:40 of the third period, sending in a loose puck from the slot.

"Yeah, I got a little more nervous at the end there. They were all over us and we all know we need those points," Jurco said. "It got a little more nervous towards the end but I think we handled it pretty well."

McBain's power-play goal put Buffalo on the scoreboard with 7:32 left in the second period. He beat Howard with a wrist shot from the left circle for McBain's fifth goal.

Alfredsson tried to explain the letdown.

"I think it's the pressure, the time of the year, the magnitude of the game, being a game we can't afford to lose, all those things combined, I think makes for us being cautious, more than playing hard for 60," he said. "Before we feel like the underdog and feel like we can claw ourselves into games and find a way to win and today we're the favorites and didn't handle that as well as we can."

Helm opened the scoring 5:47 into the game when he put in a loose puck from Hackett's right at the side of the crease. It was Helm's 11th goal.

Jurco and Andersson then scored 1:16 apart.

Jurco tipped Dekeyser's shot from the point out of the air and past Hackett for a power-play goal with 5:48 left in the first. It was Jurco's seventh goal and second in two games. It came with John Scott in the penalty box for hooking.

Alfredsson got his 18th goal, with 4:32 remaining in the opening period, when he scored on a rebound.

NOTES: Detroit C Pavel Datsyuk returned after missing 16 games with an inflamed knee. He had also missed 30 of the last 34 games. ... Buffalo D Henrik Tallinder missed his second game with a lower-body injury. ... Alfredsson returned after missing a game due to a sore back. ... Sabres goalies Michal Neuvirth and Matt Hackett both played junior hockey with the Ontario Hockey League's Plymouth Whalers, who are based in suburban Detroit. ... This was the final game for referee Don Van Massenhoven. It was the 1,277th NHL game of his career. He chose to work his last game at Joe Louis Arena and was named the game's honorary first star.

Sabres recall Adam to fill in for injured Foligno

Associated Press

April 4, 2014

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) -- The Buffalo Sabres have recalled forward Luke Adam from the minors to fill in for injured Marcus Foligno.

Adam has a goal in 10 games with Buffalo in rejoining the Sabres for the third time this season. He is currently leading the Sabres' AHL affiliate in Rochester with 27 goals in 53 games.

The call-up comes with Buffalo (21-46-9) on a three-game road trip, playing at Detroit on Friday.

Foligno was hurt early into a 2-1 loss at St. Louis on Thursday. He is expected to miss the final week of the season.

Inside the NHL / Murray sees no change coming in lottery

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

April 5, 2014

Not surprisingly, the pomp and circumstance of the NHL Draft Lottery fails to appeal to a no-nonsense guy like Tim Murray.

“I’ll go up and sit in the room, they’ll pull cards, they’ll tell us who picks No. 1 and so forth,” said the Sabres’ general manager. “I just want to be told where we’re picking and get ready for that. That’s all. I could care less about the lottery.”

Buffalo’s fans have little else to look forward to, so the April 15 event will garner significant attention. The Sabres will finish last this season, which means they’ll get the best chance at winning the lottery and drafting first overall June 27 in Philadelphia.

Before we move on to the rumored changes to future lotteries, here’s a refresher on the present format:

- All 14 teams that miss the playoffs are entered into a weighted lottery to determine the first pick.
- The 30th-place team has a 25 percent chance of winning, while the 29th-place team has an 18.8 percent chance. The odds dwindle to 0.5 percent for the team that finishes 17th.
- The rest of the first round is conducted in reverse order of finish, so no team can move down more than one spot.

“Whatever happens in the lottery happens,” Murray said. “We’re going to be picking first or second, so we’ve got to be prepared for that, and we will be.”

What Murray isn’t preparing for is a change to the lottery system.

The 2015 draft will be top heavy with franchise forwards Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel, and rumors recently flew that the NHL would take significant steps to discourage tanking next season. Reports suggested the league might use a lottery process for the first five picks, or it would base the lottery odds on teams’ performances over the last three to five seasons.

Since the Sabres are expected to be near the bottom again next year, fans didn’t take kindly to the proposed changes. Murray doesn’t expect any changes, based on his talks around the league.

“We’ve all heard that talk of the five-team, five-year rotation, things like that, but there’s been really no appetite to do that,” Murray said. “They don’t think there’s

any appetite right now to change it. I believe if there is an appetite to change it, if they're going to make a drastic change, it has to be something like three to five years out so it doesn't affect somebody that's in that position now.

“From what I understand, they're not worried about tanking for McDavid and Eichel.”

As for this year's draft, Murray said there are four players in the conversation to be drafted at the top. The GM will meet with the scouting department in May to determine who should head the Sabres' list.

Loewen's act goes viral

Until recently, Andrew Loewen's claim to fame was playing at Canisius College with Cory Conacher. Then he started sharing the crease with a female goaltender, and that led to more than 1 million views of his stellar dance moves.

Loewen, who played at Canisius from 2006 to 2010, has spent the last four seasons tending goal for the Columbus Cottonmouths of the Southern Professional Hockey League. Aside from me and the people who visited when I covered the Georgia minor-league team in 2000 and 2001, it's likely no one around here had ever heard of the Cottonmouths.

That changed last month when they signed Shannon Szabados, who backstopped Canada to gold medals in the 2010 and 2014 Olympics. Her two starts brought in a bunch of new fans, and they marveled at Loewen's tradition every time he's the backup.

The 29-year-old joins the Cottonmouths' dance team during intermission for a routine called The Wobble. He heads to the player entrance in full gear and wiggles his hips, waves his arms and shakes his backside to the beat of the music and the cheers of the crowd. A newcomer caught the dance on video, posted it to YouTube and it topped 1 million views last week.

“With Shannon coming and me doing it, that was kind of the switch that brought it from Columbus to the rest of the outside world,” Loewen said by phone. “One person liked it, shared it. The next person liked it, shared it, and here I am a YouTube viral sensation, my 10 minutes of fame.”

Loewen started his dance about two years ago as a way to entertain fans in a market that's had hockey only since 1996.

“The very first time I did it I cringed, thinking, ‘What are my teammates thinking about what I'm doing, and should I be doing this?’” said Loewen, who was encouraged to shake it by owner and fellow Wobbler Wanda Amos. “I went out there, did it, the fans went crazy, we won the game, so it was acceptable for me to

do it the next time. It took off from there and became part of the routine and expected from our Columbus Cottonmouth fans.”

He hasn't danced lately because he's been busy leading the Cottonmouths to the SPHL finals. Loewen is 4-1 in the playoffs with a 1.21 goals-against average and .963 save percentage. Last season, the Winnipeg native set league records with a 1.74 GAA and .945 save percentage in 30 appearances.

“I really had one of those seasons that you dream about as a child,” Loewen said. “It was fun to play. Every time I stepped on the ice, it felt like I was in the zone.”

Despite the numbers generated by his play and dance moves, Loewen remains the second most famous goalie on his team behind Szabados.

“She is the attention grabber, which is good and well-deserved,” Loewen said. “She's a professional and a talented goalie.”

It's amazing that a team playing along the banks of the Chattahoochee River has two netminders getting so much recognition at the same time.

“We've been getting a lot of good press lately,” GM and coach Jerome Bechard said with a laugh. “I knew I was going to get some. I didn't think it was going to be this big.”

On the fly

- The offseason in playoff-missing Vancouver will be interesting. GM Mike Gillis is already distancing himself from first-year coach John Tortorella. “I know people are upset,” Tortorella said. “I know people above me are upset. I know the players are upset. I'm upset. But we need to stay within it and keep on trying to improve.”
- New Jersey remains in the Eastern Conference playoff race despite an 0-11 record in shootouts entering Saturday night's game in Carolina. “They've got players turned around on the bench, helmets upside down, guys burying their heads,” Blues coach Ken Hitchcock said. “I mean, they've got everything going. It's tough to watch, especially at this time of year where these points are so valuable for them.”

Sabres enter last week of awful season

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

April 5, 2014

PHILADELPHIA — Welcome to the final week of what will certainly rank as one of the most memorable seasons in Buffalo Sabres history, for what obviously are most of the wrong reasons.

They've gone through a franchise-record 44 players, replaced the coach and general manager, hired a president of hockey operations and then saw him resign or get fired, depending upon who you believe. On top of all that, they've lost more than any team in Buffalo history.

The Sabres have five games left in these eight days, starting tonight in the Wells Fargo Center against the Philadelphia Flyers. Buffalo took Saturday off after Friday's 3-2 loss at Detroit, its second one-goal loss in two nights.

The Sabres clinched last place overall in the NHL for the first time in 27 years with Friday's defeat. They need to get one point in their final five games to break their current tie with the 1971-72 team for the fewest points in franchise history.

The Sabres are 21-47-9 for 51 points. The '71-72 club, in the second year of the franchise, went 16-43-19 (counting ties rather than OT losses). So it also had 51 points.

Is one point a lock, you ask? Well after tonight, the Sabres host Detroit on Tuesday, play Thursday in New York against the Rangers and Saturday in Boston before finally getting a team at their level when they host the New York Islanders next Sunday.

Another big subplot for the final week is Buffalo's offense, or lack thereof. The Sabres have a good chance to set the NHL record for fewest goals by a team since the expansion era started in 1967.

They currently have scored just 141 goals, 10 behind the mark of 151 set by the 1997-98 Tampa Bay Lightning. The Sabres are actually listed for 148 in the NHL standings but that counts shootout-deciding goals.

The Sabres' paltry average of 1.83 per game is lowest in history to that Tampa team's 1.84. The franchise record-low for goals had been 190 in 2002-03 and that is going to get shattered by this group.

The Sabres have some truly mind-numbing numbers offensively.

They have just 91 goals in five-on-five situations all season in 77 games, a paltry average of 1.18 per game.

No other team entered play Saturday with fewer than 122 – and the top 15 teams in the league in five-on-five scoring were all at 140 or above.

The Sabres and Lindy Ruff-led Dallas are the only teams in the league this year without a single goal in a five-on-three situation. They also entered Saturday with NHL-lows of 37 goals in the first period and 44 in the second. They have 57 in the third, which was one more than Vancouver.

The Sabres have been shut out 10 times and held to one goal in 23 other games. With injuries and the trade of Matt Moulson stifling the offense, they have not scored more than three in any of their last 16 games.

Still, they have played much better in their last four games after the 6-1 stinker March 27 in Nashville.

Since then, Buffalo has lost in overtime to Tampa Bay, beat New Jersey in a shootout and dropped one-goal decisions at St. Louis and Detroit in games in which they had their opponents on their heels in the final minute pressing for a tying goal.

“We’ve been really talking to the team about the compete level,” said coach Ted Nolan after Friday’s game. “We don’t care about the skill sets and position. We want to see who wants to compete and who wants to be a big part of this team going forward and turning it around.”

The Sabres will skate this morning and should have more updates on the injuries to Drew Stafford, Henrik Tallinder and Marcus Foligno. Matt Hackett had a good bounceback final 40 minutes in goal in Detroit, blanking the Red Wings, after Nathan Lieuwen was strong in St. Louis, so Nolan could go either way in goal tonight.

...

The Flyers are coming off Saturday’s 5-2 loss at Boston and are in danger of sliding into a wild-card slot for the playoffs after spending the last couple of weeks thinking they were probably locked into a first-round matchup with the New York Rangers.

The Flyers are just two points ahead of Columbus in the battle for third place in the Metropolitan Division with five games left. If they slide out of it and manage to hang on to a wild card, they would be looking at a first-rounder against either Boston or Pittsburgh.

A matchup with the Bruins would be particularly onerous, as Saturday’s loss meant the Flyers were swept in a season series by Boston for the first time since 1989-90.

Loss to Red Wings ‘earns’ Sabres a dubious distinction

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

April 5, 2014

DETROIT — It was a gritty effort on the road against a team desperately looking to lock up a playoff spot.

It was a display of that classic hockey cliché “compete level” that had the Buffalo Sabres knocking on the comeback doorstep in the third period.

Only problem was that first period. Which was bad. Very bad.

And in the end the effort fell short as the Buffalo Sabres dropped a 3-2 decision to the Detroit Red Wings in Joe Louis Arena on Friday night.

The loss officially clinched last place in the National Hockey League for the Sabres. Bottom of the barrel. Thirtieth out of 30 teams. It’s the first time the Sabres have finished last in the league since the 1986-87 season.

It’s a dubious distinction, albeit one that comes with promise. The Sabres now have the best chance (25 percent) in the NHL lottery for the overall No. 1 draft pick in June.

The Sabres spent much of the first 20 minutes of Friday’s game trying to stop the bleeding.

The literal bleeding came when Luke Adam, on an emergency call-up from Rochester, took a slap shot in the face just 10:34 into the game. He left in the first period but returned in the second period after having the cut attended to on his jaw.

The figurative bleeding resulted from some bad defensive play and a general slow start that saw Matt Hackett give up three goals on 12 first-period shots – to Darren Helm, Tomas Jurco and Daniel Afredsson.

But the Sabres regrouped, made a few adjustments and mostly refocused their attitude and approach to play noticeably in the second and actually control some of the play in the third.

“I think it was more of a mental approach,” coach Ted Nolan said. “And plus we had to start going north-south with the puck. The first little bit we were starting to do those fancy plays and cross-ice passes and Detroit’s too good of a team to do that.

“So we talked about a couple things. About stopping and starting in our defensive zone. Moving from north to south and then trying to keep the simple play. Along with the mental approach we did a few things tactically.”

With a bit more aggression, the Sabres got on the board in the second with a power-play goal. Jamie McBain found room to the left of Red Wings goalie Jimmy Howard and buried his opportunity for his fifth goal of the season.

Chad Ruhwedel had the first assist, and his first point in the National Hockey League.

Nick Deslauriers scored his first NHL goal at 6:40 of the third, snapping in the puck after Johan Larsson won the faceoff in the Detroit zone.

“I think everybody knew what we had to do. Just shoot the puck,” Deslauriers said. “They’re a good team and if you let them enter the zone three-on-two they have a chance to put a good shot on net or do something good. Just all the forwards were tracking back and helping our D’s. That’s what we did the last two periods.”

Hackett improved his play as well, making 19 saves over the final 40 minutes to keep the Red Wings off the board.

It was a key win for Detroit, which is battling for its 23rd straight playoff appearance. The Red Wings moved three games in front of the Columbus Blue Jackets in the wild card race.

Next up for the Sabres is a trip to Philadelphia on Sunday for a 7:30 p.m. game against the Flyers at Wells Fargo Center.

The Sabres then return to Buffalo for another meeting with the Red Wings at 7 p.m. Tuesday in First Niagara Center.

Sabres notebook: Adam shakes off a painful moment

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

April 5, 2014

DETROIT — At one point in his career, Luke Adam would be frustrated.

He's gone up to the NHL. He's gone back down to the American Hockey League.

But after four years in the Buffalo Sabres' organization, he understands the drill. And on Friday when he appeared in his 86th NHL game, he was focused on making the most of his latest opportunity.

Adam joined the Sabres on Friday night in Detroit, where Buffalo lost to the Red Wings, 3-2.

For a moment, it looked as if the emergency call-up might need an emergency call up of his own. Just 10:34 into the game, Adam took a puck to his face, leaving a trail of blood on the ice as he skated off to the dressing room.

Adam was working for position in front of the net when Jamie McBain let go a slap shot from the blue line. The knuckleball shot then deflected off Red Wings defenseman Brian Lashoff and hit Adam in the face.

"The way things have been going, I couldn't look at it," Nolan said. "I didn't want to see it. I didn't want to see the replay. When we came in the dressing room they said he was going to be ready to go. It just looked like a little cut on his jaw. It looked like it was going to be a major cut on his jaw, but thankfully it wasn't that serious."

Adam returned for the second period, playing on a line with Johan Larsson and Nicolas Deslauriers and was excited for his third call-up of the season.

"No I don't think so," Adam said when asked if the transit between the AHL and the NHL has been frustrating. "I think I'm past that point now. Maybe when I was a little younger it was a little frustrating, but I'm not even focused on it. It comes more often and in better circumstances when you're not focused on it. It's been a good season and I'm looking forward to tonight."

He has 27 goals with 47 points in 53 games for the Amerks this season.

The numbers are impressive and coach Ted Nolan wants to see Adam make that transition to the NHL. "Luke's been playing really well down in the American league ... Now we've just got to figure out how to get him to do that at this level," Nolan said. "It's another shot for Luke. ... It's a whole fresh regime coming in right how and you get a fresh pair of eyes put on you and expectations are a little bit different."

Those fresh eyes and expectations not only bring new opportunities for players to make impressions. Apparently they also will be making some changes to the offseason condition for the Sabres organization.

There are 10 players on the injured list, including latest casualties Drew Stafford, Henrik Tallinder and Marcus Foligno. Foligno was injured in his first shift Thursday in St. Louis while Stafford was “banged up” Tuesday against New Jersey and did not play against the Blues.

Nolan said that Foligno’s injury may not keep him out for the rest of the season.

“Foligno surprisingly is not as bad as we originally thought,” Nolan said. “He was walking around pretty good today, which is a good sign but we’ll keep our fingers crossed with that. Drew, he was walking worse today than he was yesterday. So we’ll see with him also.”

But one thing is clear from Nolan – the injuries that have plagued the team late in the season has him ready to address summer training. “You look at the number of injuries that we have, if you’re well conditioned and take care of yourself in the summer, that’s the foundation you need during the wintertime,” Nolan said. “We’ll reassess that and get doing some things differently and maybe have a different result.”

...

Referee Don Van Massenhoven officiated his final NHL game Friday night. He closed the books on a career that included 1,278 regular-season games, 87 Stanley Cup playoff games, six Stanley Cup finals and the 2006 Olympics.

Flyers go for season sweep of Sabres

By Davis Harper

NHL.com

April 5, 2014

SABRES (21-47-9) at FLYERS (39-29-9)

TV: TSN2, NBCSN

Last 10: Buffalo 2-7-1; Philadelphia 4-4-2

Season series: The Philadelphia Flyers will go for the three-game sweep of the Buffalo Sabres on Sunday. Flyers forward Vincent Lecavalier scored the winner with 14.8 seconds left in regulation on Jan. 14 at First Niagara Center.

Big story: The Flyers will look to get back on track Sunday against the NHL-worst Sabres, and the favorable matchup couldn't come at a better time. Philadelphia is 0-2-2 over its past four games, including a 2-0 loss to the Columbus Blue Jackets on Thursday.

In the race for third place in the Metropolitan Division, the Flyers are two points ahead of the Blue Jackets. Sunday will be the Flyers' second-to-last game in the regular season at Wells Fargo Center, where they are 23-14-2.

Team Scope:

Sabres: Buffalo is 1-5-1 over its past seven, the win coming in a shootout over the New Jersey Devils on Tuesday. The Sabres lost two nail-biters this week away from home, the first a 2-1 decision to the Western Conference-leading St. Louis Blues and the other a 3-2 defeat to the streaking Detroit Red Wings. All this has been done with a pair of rookie goaltenders and a makeshift, injury-riddled lineup.

Against the Red Wings on Friday, the Sabres mounted a late comeback on the strength of young players: defenseman Chad Ruhwedel, who recorded his first NHL assist, and forward Nicolas Deslauriers, who scored his first NHL goal.

"We competed," goaltender Matt Hackett said after the game. "We showed we can play with any team, first place or a great team like Detroit here. They're both tough buildings to play in and we're going in the right direction, I think."

Flyers: Philadelphia had won six of eight prior to its recent skid, which continued Saturday afternoon in a 5-2 loss to the Boston Bruins.

"I don't think we've been as sharp," forward Scott Hartnell said after the game. "Those games a few weeks ago seemed like every shift we were on, and the last couple it seems like we haven't paid the price, or haven't played within the

system. ... You can really tell we were going four lines all together in the system, and the last couple games have been not that way."

Philadelphia, which ranks in the top half of the League in goals per game and shots per game, failed to score in two straight (going 160:01 between goals) before scoring two quick ones late in the second period against Boston.

Who's hot: Sabres forward Tyler Ennis has two goals and an assist over his past three games. ... Lecavalier has a goal for the Flyers in each game against the Sabres and has 40 points (21 goals, 19 assists) in 51 games against the Sabres.

Injury report: Sabres forwards Marcus Foligno (lower body), Drew Stafford (undisclosed), Zenon Konopka (back spasms) and Torrey Mitchell (undisclosed), and defensemen Henrik Tallinder (lower body) and Tyler Myers (upper body) are day-to-day. Goaltenders Michal Neuvirth (lower body) and Jhonas Enroth (leg) are day-to-day. Forward Kevin Porter (lower body) is on injured reserve, defenseman Alexander Sulzer (upper body) is out indefinitely and forward Chris Stewart (ankle) could return this season. ... Flyers wing Steve Downie (upper body) is day-to-day.

Fast start by Red Wings tightens hold on wild card

NHL.com

April 4, 2014

A big first period helped the Detroit Red Wings move two points closer to their 23rd consecutive appearance in the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

Darren Helm, Tomas Jurco and Daniel Alfredsson scored in a span of less than 10 minutes, and the Red Wings rode their fast start to a 3-2 victory against the Buffalo Sabres at Joe Louis Arena on Friday.

The Red Wings (37-26-14) have won four in a row and hold the first wild-card playoff position in the Eastern Conference. They are three points ahead of the Columbus Blue Jackets, who hold the second wild-card spot, and four ahead of the Toronto Maple Leafs, the closest of the teams outside the playoffs in the East.

Detroit and Columbus, which lost 4-3 at home to the Chicago Blackhawks, each has a game in hand on Toronto.

"We're going to keep going and we can't let up," Alfredsson said. "We've put ourselves in a good spot."

Jimmy Howard made 21 saves and is 5-0-0 against the Sabres. The Red Wings are 13-0-1 against the Sabres at home since Buffalo's regulation victory in Detroit on March 6, 1994.

It was coach Mike Babcock's 413th win for Detroit, tying him with Jack Adams for most in Red Wings history.

Last-place Buffalo, which didn't arrive in Detroit until nearly 4 a.m. Friday following a 2-1 road loss to the St. Louis Blues the night before, got a goal each from defenseman Jamie McBain and rookie Nicolas Deslauriers, his first in the NHL.

"We have nothing to lose," McBain said. "We left it all out on the ice. We battled, and hopefully it's a sign of things to come."

Rookie goaltender Matt Hackett made 28 saves.

"We competed. We battled," Hackett said. "We're going in the right direction."

Detroit jumped in front 5:47 into the first period. Danny DeKeyser's shot from the top of the right circle caromed off the end boards to Luke Glendening in front of the crease. Hackett stopped Glendening's shot but was helpless to prevent Helm from roofing the rebound for his 11th goal of the season.

It became 2-0 at 14:12, when DeKeyser's power-play slap shot from the right point was tipped by Jurco in the high slot and sailed past Hackett. Alfredsson, who had the second assist on Jurco's goal, made it 3-0 at 15:28 when he was left alone to hammer the rebound of Jakub Kindl's right-point slap shot.

"I thought we came out and really played well," Babcock said. "But like most games in the NHL, it's a one-goal game. Our guys did tons of good things. In reality, we had a lot of opportunities to score but didn't finish on a lot of our chances."

Buffalo, the NHL's lowest-scoring team, made it 3-1 at 12:28 of the second period when McBain scored 11 seconds into a power play. After Brendan Smith went off for holding the stick of Cory Conacher, the Sabres won the draw and McBain zipped a shot from the left faceoff dot that beat Howard to the short side for his fifth of the season. Chad Ruhwedel, who made the pass that set up McBain's goal, earned his first NHL point.

"I thought in the second period our intensity fell off and kind of got them going," Babcock said. "I thought we started real good. We were all over them. Suddenly we had some skill and we had cute-itis going and we didn't want to shoot it in the net. We wanted to pass it one more time, and the next thing you know it's game on."

Deslauriers, another of the Sabres' many call-ups this season, made it a one-goal game at 6:40 of the third period when he picked up a loose puck off a faceoff in the Detroit zone and whipped a shot from between the circles that beat Howard cleanly.

"It's about time," said Deslauriers, who played his 14th game. "The only bad note, the team lost."

The Sabres pressed for the tying goal in the final minutes but were able to get few clean attempts on Howard.

"We got a little cautious down the stretch, but overall I thought we handled it pretty well," Alfredsson said.

The Red Wings, who've battled injuries all season, got back center Pavel Datsyuk after he missed 16 games with an injured left knee. Datsyuk was plus-1 in 17:45 of ice time.

Referee Don Van Massenhoven worked the final game of his career. Retiring after more than two decades in the NHL, he was named the game's honorary First Star.

Material from team media was used in this report

Sabres Deslauriers has quite a week

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

April 5, 2014

Philadelphia, PA (WGR 550) -- With this crazy schedule, Ted Nolan gave his team Saturday off in Philadelphia. Buffalo played in St. Louis on Thursday, Detroit on Friday and will play the Flyers on Sunday.

It was quite a week for Sabres rookie winger Nic Deslauriers. On Monday his wife gave birth to their first child, a daughter and then against the Red Wings, he netted his first NHL goal.

It took the 23 year old 14 games to get that goal and he gave a sigh of relief after it went in right of a faceoff won by Johan Larsson. Deslauriers said it was a relief, "Yes, it's about time. It was on a bad note, the team lost." Deslauriers added, "I'll take that one as a gift, I didn't even look where I was shooting, it just popped in and it felt good."

Not many men get to have their first child and their first NHL goal in the same week. The winger said, "Yes, like I said it's a gift, it's something special, but I'll stick with the birth of my child first, but second my first goal."

There are things Ted Nolan has liked about Deslauriers game, especially his hitting, but he wants to see that all the time and he moves Nic around the lineup depending on how he's going. Nolan said, "There's nothing like confidence, confidence breeds a lot of things, but he's still got a long ways to go before he scores at this level consistently and he's still a young player."

Talking to Nolan for the pregame on Friday it was the second time I've heard him really rip into the team's summer training. Nolan said, "You look at the number of injuries that we have, if you're well-conditioned and take care of yourself in the summer, that's the foundation you need during the wintertime," Nolan added, "We'll reassess that and get doing some things differently and maybe have a different result." Darcy Regier was a big booster of strength and conditioning coach Doug McKenney who was hired in the summer of 1995. More and more players have told me they've not been satisfied with what McKenney has them doing and have found other trainers in the summer. With as strongly as Nolan has been criticizing the summer training, I would be shocked if Nolan retains him after the season.

Red Wings Ride Fast Start to 3-2 Win Over Sabres

By Dan Cave

WGR 550

April 4, 2014

Chad Ruhwedel picked up his first career NHL point and Nicolas Deslauriers notched his first-ever NHL goal, but the Sabres fell to the Red Wings on Friday 3-2.

The Red Wings jumped out to the 1-0 lead thanks to Darren Helm, who finished off a scramble in front of the net, lifting the puck over Hackett for his 11th of the season. Later in the period, with John Scott in the box for high-sticking, Tomas Jurco put the Red Wings up by two, tipping a Danny DeKeyser shot into the Buffalo net. Only 1:16 after Jurco's goal, Daniel Alfredsson tapped an easy rebound past Hackett for the 3-0 Detroit lead.

Buffalo finally got on the board at 12:28 of the second period on a Jamie McBain power play goal. McBain beat Jimmy Howard blocker-side from the near faceoff dot. With the primary assist on the goal, Ruhwedel picked up his first-ever point. Delauriers' first-ever goal came at 6:40 of the final frame, a laser from the slot immediately after a faceoff win. Johan Larsson slid the puck over to Delauriers, who beat Howard to make it a one-goal game.

Howard finished with 21 saves while Hackett stopped 28 for Buffalo. The Sabres head to Philadelphia on Sunday for a 7:30 p.m. faceoff against the Flyers on WGR 550 and the Buffalo Sabres Radio Network.

1st Period

Goals

5:47 - DET - Darren Helm (11) (Luke Glendening, Danny DeKeyser)

14:12 - DET - Tomas Jurco (7) (PPG) (Danny DeKeyser, Daniel Alfredsson)

15:28 - DET - Daniel Alfredsson (18) (Jakub Kindl, Justin Abdelkader)

Penalties

8:52 - DET - Brendan Smith (2 min., hooking)

12:59 - BUF - John Scott (2 min., high-sticking)

2nd Period

Goals

12:28 - BUF - Jamie McBain (5) (PPG) (Chad Ruhwedel, Ville Leino)

Penalties

12:17 - DET - Brendan Smith (2 min., holding)

13:28 - BUF - Zemgus Girgensons (2 min., holding)

18:54 - DET - David Legwand (2 min., interference)

19:44 - BUF - Tyler Ennis (2 min., hooking)

3rd Period

Goals

6:40 - BUF - Nicolas Deslauriers (1) (Johan Larsson)

Penalties

None

Goaltending

BUF - Matt Hackett (28 saves, 31 shots)

DET - Jimmy Howard (21 saves, 23 shots)

Power Plays

BUF - 1 of 3

DET - 1 of 3

Three Stars

1.) DET - Darren Helm (1 G, 0 A)

2.) DET - Danny DeKeyser (0 G, 2 A)

3.) BUF - Luke Adam (0 G, 0 A)

SABRES UNABLE TO COMPLETE RALLY IN DETROIT

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

April 5, 2014

DETROIT – Friday was a night of first for two Buffalo Sabres rookies.

Nicolas Deslauriers scored his first career NHL goal and defenseman Chad Ruhwedel recorded his first career point, an assist.

However, the Sabres couldn't pull out a victory against the Detroit Red Wings. Buffalo mounted a late rally, scoring the final two goals of the game, but fell 3-2 at Joe Louis Arena.

Coming off a physical battle the night before in St. Louis, the Sabres fell behind 3-0 to Detroit in the first period. Goaltender Matt Hackett, who stopped 28 of 31 Red Wings shots, was impressed with how the team was able to stick with two of the NHL's perennially great teams.

"We competed," he said. "We showed we can play with any team, first place or a great team like Detroit here. They're both tough buildings to play in and we're going in the right direction, I think."

The first period was an up-tempo affair with chances being generated on both ends of the ice. However, the Red Wings scored three goals on 12 shots in the first to take a 3-0 lead.

Deslauriers made it a one-goal game 6:40 into the third period. Johan Larsson won a faceoff to the right of Red Wings goaltender Jimmy Howard and then kicked the puck over to the middle of the ice. Deslauriers went to the slot, took the loose puck and beat Red Wings goaltender Jimmy Howard to make it 3-2. The goal was also his first career point.

He celebrated the birth of his daughter earlier in the week and had the chance to celebrate in a different way Friday night.

"It's a gift," Deslauriers said. "It's something special, but I think I'll stick with the birth of my child first. But the second is especially my first goal."

Deslauriers, 23, has only 14 games under his belt. Buffalo acquired him from the Los Angeles Kings at the NHL Trade Deadline as part of the package that sent defenseman Brayden McNabb to the West Coast. Deslauriers was supposed to join the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League, but injuries with the Sabres meant he joined the team before he could even suit up for the Amerks.

Sabres coach Ted Nolan has been impressed with his play for the most part, but he also sees a player that still has a lot to learn.

“There’s nothing like confidence. Confidence breeds a lot of things and you never know, but he’s got a long ways to go before he scores at this level consistently,” Nolan said. “He’s still a young player and he got thrown into the fire right after we picked him up in a trade, put him right into a situation that he’s in here, but he’s done well for himself.”

Jamie McBain scored Buffalo’s first goal, a power-play marker with 7:32 to play in the second period to make it 3-1.

The goal came as he crept down to the left faceoff circle and beat goaltender Jimmy Howard short side with a one-timer. The pass came from Ruhwedel, who earned his first career point on the play.

“When you have a good pass like that you don’t have to think a whole lot about what to do next,” McBain said of the play that set up his fifth goal of the season. “You can kind of focus on the shot, focus on the situation about where you want to put the shot instead of deal with taking it on your backhand or taking it out of your feet or something. So it was a great pass and I was able to find a whole.”

The Red Wings struck first as Darren Helm scored 5:47 into the game. A shot by Danny Dekeyser from the point deflected off the glass and out in front of the Buffalo net. Matt Hackett made a right toe save off a shot by Luke Glendening but the rebound went to Helm around down on the goal line and he roofed it in for his 11th goal of the season.

Then Detroit scored twice in 1:16 to go ahead by three. First, Tomas Jurco deflected in a shot by Dekeyser with 5:48 left in the period. Then, Alfredsson cashed in on a Hackett rebound in front of the net with 4:32 to play.

Nolan decided to stick with Hackett between the pipes instead of pulling him in favor of the other rookie goaltender on the roster, Nathan Lieuwen.

“That was a big game for Matt, especially after the first period and the way he fought back and the way he battled back,” Nolan said. “And that’s what we want to see with the team moving forward, see who’s going to battle, who’s going to compete and it was a good thing down 3-0, the easy thing to do is probably put Lieuwen in, but we wanted to see how he battled and he battled well.”

Hackett said was thankful to have the opportunity to stay in the game and give his team a chance to stage a comeback. He’s started four of the past six games and feels like he’s progressing with each start.

“I feel better. I feel more calm. I have to find a way to stay between that calm and I have to respect the other team,” he said. “I’ve got to find a way to make a few more saves than I have been.”

The Sabres had a bit of a scare midway through the opening period.

Luke Adam left the game with 9:26 remaining in the first. A knuckling shot by Jamie McBain deflected slightly off the shoulder of Justin Abdelkader and hit Adam – who was standing in front of the net – in the mouth. He returned for the start of the second period.

Adam is up from Rochester because the Sabres have been dealing with a rash of injuries the past few weeks. The most recent injuries at forward include ones to Drew Stafford and Marcus Foligno.

Stafford has missed the past three games with a lower-body injury and the team lost Foligno in his first shift against the Blues on Thursday.

Before the game, Nolan said that Foligno's injury may not be season-ending like they originally thought, but that they'll still monitor his progress closely so that he doesn't sustain any setbacks. Stafford's injury however, could keep him out a little bit longer than the team initially thought. Nolan said that Stafford looked a little bit worse on Friday than the day before.

The team is also without goaltenders Jhonas Enroth and Michal Neuvirth, defensemen Tyler Myers, Alexander Sulzer and Henrik Tallinder and forwards Chris Stewart, Zenon Konopka and Torrey Mitchell.

Buffalo wraps up its three-game road trip with a game against the Philadelphia Flyers on Sunday. The game can be seen on NBCSN at 7:30 p.m.

Detroit 3, Buffalo 2: With playoffs in sight, Red Wings survive scare

By Helene St. James

Detroit Free Press

April 5, 2014

There were suggestions about being too cute and too cautious afterward, but most of all there was the chatter of celebration.

The Red Wings rolled out their fourth straight victory, a 3-2 win Friday against the Buffalo Sabres at Joe Louis Arena. It was not the prettiest performance, but the NHL isn't judged on style points. By the end of the night, the Wings deposited another two points in their playoff piggy bank, shoring up seventh place in the Eastern Conference on goals from Darren Helm, Tomas Jurco and Daniel Alfredsson.

The Wings had a three-goal lead 16 minutes into the first period, then let the game get too interesting. Maybe it had to do with Pavel Datsyuk being back in the lineup for the first time in five weeks, giving the Wings more offensive potential, especially against an opponent that lost for the 47th time this season.

“We started really good, we were all over them,” coach Mike Babcock said. “Suddenly we had some skill and suddenly we were dangling around with the puck, and now we had cute-itis going and then we didn't want to shoot it in the net, we wanted to pass it one more time. The next thing you know, it's game on, instead of just doing things simple and hard and right.

“That was us feeling like we're a pretty good team suddenly. Maybe we weren't scared for the first time in two months.”

Babcock wasn't sure whether Datsyuk would be available for today's game at Montreal, because of how long he had been out. Alfredsson had missed Wednesday's game with a sore back and was also considered questionable against the Canadiens.

It's only the second time this season the Wings have won four games in a row. It looked like a sure-fire extension after a first period that the Wings so dominated Jimmy Howard barely saw the puck. But Buffalo used a power play in the second period to make it 3-1, with Jamie McBain scoring on a wrist shot, and the Wings barely counterattacked.

“We got a little bit ahead of ourselves in the second period,” Howard said, “and we got away from our game plan. But it's just about getting two points right now.”

The Sabres made it 3-2 at 6:40 of the third on Nicolas Deslaurier's shot from the slot.

“I think we probably tried to protect the lead too much and not trying to get the fourth one,” Alfredsson said. “They worked themselves into the game and are a dangerous team. They play pretty open. They spread us out a bit, but I thought down the stretch we did a good job.”

Alfredsson cited the time of the year and the magnitude of the game as reasons for the lapse.

“All those things combined I think makes for us being cautious more than playing hard for 60,” he said. “Before we feel like the underdog and we claw ourselves into games and find a way to win. Today we’re the favorites and didn’t handle it as well as we can.”

Alfredsson had a goal and an assist, playing in front of his dad, who is in town for the week from Sweden — but that Datsyuk played might have made Hasse Alfredsson’s trip.

“I know my dad was extremely happy,” Alfredsson said. “He loves Pavel for the way he plays both ends of the ice, and his smarts, so he made one Swede happy today.”

The Wings as a group were happy, as they’re almost assuredly heading to the playoffs for a 23rd straight season.

Red Wings move closer to playoff spot with victory over Sabres

By Ted Kulfan

Detroit News

April 4, 2014

Detroit — When a team is in a tight chase during a playoff race, it doesn't hurt to have the Buffalo Sabres on the schedule.

No NHL team has been worse this season, either statistically or by the eyeball test.

For the Red Wings, having these Sabres on the schedule twice over the final six games isn't a bad thing.

It sure wasn't Friday, as the Red Wings raced to a quick lead and held on to win, 3-2.

In all, it wasn't the best Red Wings victory of the season. They've played better. But this time of year, two points is two points, no matter the overall appearance.

"That's all that matters," said goalie Jimmy Howard, who stopped 21 shots for the victory. "It doesn't matter about stats, it's just about getting two points, whether you win 1-0 or 7-6. It's about getting two points and getting into the playoffs."

The Sabres (21-47-9) are far from the playoffs but can be a nuisance just the same.

"They're dangerous," Howard said. "You can't afford to come up short against them, you have to come out there and find a way to get two points. Teams like that aren't going to roll over just because they're out of it. They have guys playing for contracts and pride.

"You have to find a way to win."

This was also a profitable night for the Red Wings (37-26-14) in the chase for a playoff spot in terms of the teams around them in the standings.

The Red Wings moved three points ahead of Columbus in the race for the top wild-card spot, as Columbus lost 4-3 to Chicago with 3.7 seconds left.

Toronto, idle Friday, trails the Red Wings by four points, with New Jersey moving to within six points after defeating Washington 2-1.

"We can't let up," said Daniel Alfredsson, who returned after missing a game with back spasms and scored a goal. "We put ourselves in a good spot but you never know."

Along with Alfredsson, Pavel Datsyuk returned for the first time since Feb. 27. Datsyuk didn't get on the scoresheet, but was plus-1 in 17 minutes, 45 seconds and 23 shifts.

“My father (Hasse) is here for the week and he was extremely happy (that Datsyuk played),” Alfredsson said. “He loves Pavel, the way he plays both ends of the ice and plays so smart. He (Datsyuk) made one Swede happy.”

Coach Mike Babcock wasn't sure if Datsyuk would play tonight in Montreal, but was generally pleased with Datsyuk's performance.

“He looked like he's a talented guy,” said Babcock, who tied Jack Adams for Red Wings career victories with 413.

“His fitness showed in the third period for sure, and that's not a surprise. I don't know if it's fitness or not having played in so long.”

Darren Helm, Tomas Jurco (power play) and Daniel Alfredsson scored first-period goals for the Red Wings.

Jamie MacBain (power play) and Nicolas Deslauriers scored for Buffalo.

Deslauriers scored his first NHL goal at 6:40 of the third period, cutting the Red Wings lead to 3-2.

But the Red Wings rarely let the Sabres pressure in the final half of the third period.

“We came out and played real well,” Babcock said. “Then like most games in the NHL, it's a one-goal game. Our guys did tons of good things in reality. We had opportunities and didn't score on our chances.”

Helm scored his 11th goal at 5:47, batting in a rebound with the Red Wings swarming the net, beginning the three-goal first-period surge.

After a Sabres power play went nowhere, Jurco put the Red Wings ahead 2-0 with a power-play goal of his own at 14:12.

Jurco scored his seventh goal, deflecting a point shot from Danny DeKeyser.

Alfredsson made it 3-0 scoring his 18th goal, batting in a rebound of Jakub Kindl's shot from the point.

But after a robust first period, Babcock felt the Red Wings got stung with “cute-itis” in their game.

“We wanted to pass it one more time (instead of shooting the puck) and it's game on instead of just doing things simple and hard and right,” Babcock said.

Strong start helps Wings defeat Sabres

By Andrea Nelson

RedWings.com

April 4, 2014

DETROIT - The Red Wings did exactly what they were supposed to against Buffalo Friday night: they started on time.

Detroit jumped out to a three-goal lead in the first period to take an early edge over the Eastern Conference's last-place Sabres in what easily could have been, and almost was, a trap game.

"To me, I thought we started really good, we were all over them," coach Mike Babcock said. "I thought suddenly we had some skill and suddenly we were dangling around with the puck and now we had the cute-itis going and then we didn't want to shoot it in the net, we wanted to pass it one more time and the next thing you know it's game on instead of just doing things simple and hard and right."

The three-goal advantage proved to be pivotal down the stretch, as the Wings failed to score for the remainder of the game, but gave up two scores in the second and third periods that dwindled their lead to just one goal.

"I think it's the pressure, the time of the year, the magnitude of the game, being a game we can't afford to lose, all those things combined, I think makes for us being cautious, more than playing hard for 60," said forward Daniel Alfredsson. "Before we feel like the underdog and feel like we can claw ourselves into games and find a way to win and today we're the favorites and didn't handle that as well as we can."

The Wings received goals from Darren Helm, Tomas Jurco and Alfredsson to take a commanding lead in the first 20 minutes of play. Helm netted Detroit's first goal less than six minutes into the game, cleaning up Luke Glendening's rebound in front of the net. The goal was Helm's 11th of the season, one shy of his career season high.

Jurco and Alfredsson scored goals just over one minute apart to give Detroit a 3-0 lead late in the first period. Jurco netted a power play goal, a deflection off defenseman Danny DeKesyer's shot, and led all players with three shots in the opening period.

DeKesyer, who also assisted on Helm's goal, earned his second career two-assist game in the victory.

"We had a great power play breakout and we got in the zone," Jurco explained. "DK with Alfie made a nice passing play and DK shot it. I was trying to follow the

puck in the air and it hit my blade so it was a good goal and it's really good for me, too."

Seventy-six seconds after Jurco's goal, Alfredsson netted his 18th goal of the season, cleaning up the rebound off Jakub Kindl's shot. Alfredsson earned one goal and one assist in the victory after missing Wednesday's game with a lower back injury.

"I felt OK," Alfredsson said. "Obviously missing a few days, it felt great to be back on the ice and skating this morning and obviously playing again felt good."

But despite the three-goal advantage, there were still 40 minutes left to play. The Wings proceeded to give up goals to Jamie McBain and Nicolas Deslauriers in the second and third periods, respectively, which cut Detroit's lead to just one goal.

"I think we probably tried to protect the lead too much, not trying to get the fourth one," Alfredsson said. "They worked themselves into the game. They're a dangerous team. They played pretty open, spread us out a bit. I thought down the stretch we did a good job. Last 6-7 minutes felt comfortable."

The Wings maintained their lead through the final 13 minutes of play, earning two important points with just five games remaining in the regular season.

"That's all that matters this time of year," said goaltender Jimmy Howard, who made 21 saves in the victory. "It doesn't matter anything about stats right now, it's just about getting two points, whether you win the game 1-0 or 7-6 it's about getting two points and getting into the playoffs."

After missing 16 games with a knee injury, Pavel Datsyuk returned to Detroit's lineup against Buffalo, recording 17:45 of ice time, one shot and one blocked shot. The center skated on a line with Helm and Justin Abdelkader.

"I thought he looked like he's a talented guy," said Babcock. "I thought his fitness showed in the third period for sure and that's not a surprise. I don't know if it's his fitness or just he hasn't played in so long but he'll probably feel better tomorrow."

The victory marked Babcock's 413th career win with the Wings, tying former Detroit coach Jack Adams on the club's all-time winningest coaches list. Babcock holds a 413-196-90 record through 699 games, while Adams earned a 413-390-161 record through 964 games.