



Buffalo Sabres

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Sabres-Wild Preview

By Noey Kupchan

Associated Press

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The slumping Minnesota Wild are looking to reignite their offense after a forgettable few games.

A matchup against the NHL's worst team could help them regroup.

The Wild try to avoid a fifth straight loss when they host the Buffalo Sabres on Thursday night.

Minnesota (7-7-0) is looking for answers after getting outscored 14-3 in its last four games. The Wild are likely looking forward to returning home after closing a three-game trip with Tuesday's 3-1 loss to New Jersey, falling to 2-6-0 on the road.

Ryan Carter provided all the offense with a short-handed goal as Minnesota went 0 for 4 on the power play. The Wild have converted a league-worst 4.5 percent (2 for 44) of their chances on the man advantage, just behind Buffalo's mark of 5.7 percent (3 for 53).

"We had so many good looks," forward Jason Pominville said. "But at the end of the day, we need to find a way to put it in the back of the net and we didn't.

"We just have to keep battling, keep fighting, until we can get some of our injured guys back."

Zach Parise is expected to miss a fourth straight game with a concussion, but defenseman Jared Spurgeon (upper-body injury) is nearing a return after a five-game absence. Parise leads the team with 10 points.

"We all know adversity can be good for you if you handle it the right way," coach Mike Yeo said. "But it's how you respond to it. This is when you see what you're made of."

The Wild are seeking a third straight win over the Sabres (3-12-2), after Pominville had a goal in each game against his former team last season. Buffalo is averaging 1.1 goals to rank last in the league and is 29th with 3.5 goals allowed per game.

Despite the Sabres' struggles, the Wild aren't expecting anything to come easy.

"I know that they have a lot of things that could present a challenge for us, but if we're thinking of anything other than ourselves right now then we're doing ourselves a disservice," Yeo said. "We have to figure our own stuff out here and it starts with playing a 60-minute hockey game."

Buffalo has dropped four in a row, including back-to-back 6-1 losses to Pittsburgh on Saturday and St. Louis on Tuesday. Michal Neuvirth allowed all six goals on 29 shots against the Blues, dropping to 1-3-0 with a 3.51 goals-against average on the road.

"We're still learning and we're still growing," coach Ted Nolan said. "We're trying to find little bright spots here and there to build upon."

One of those moments may have come Tuesday when the Sabres quickly came to the defense of Tyler Ennis following a late hit in the second period.

"I was very happy and proud of my teammates. I owe them one for having my back," Ennis told the team's official website. "That's what teams do. Good teams, tight teams, we stick up for each other and that was really nice to see."

The Sabres may turn back to Jhonas Enroth, who is 1-7-1 with a 3.63 GAA. He is 1-1-0 with a 2.01 GAA against the Wild.

Minnesota's Darcy Kuemper is set to make his first appearance against Buffalo. He's gone 5-1-0 with a 1.48 GAA and two shutouts at home.

Sabres forward Patrick Kaleta is finally ready to return after working his way back from a serious knee injury and facial surgery. His last NHL appearance came Oct. 10, 2013.

One year in, Nolan relishes role in Sabres' rebuilding

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

November 12, 2014

EDINA, Minn. – Ted Nolan spent Wednesday with his team far from Buffalo, practicing in the cold of one of those classic Minnesota high school hockey barns. His coach's mantra kept him focused on the day's tasks and the Sabres' preparation for tonight's game against the Minnesota Wild.

But there will be an interesting historical footnote to tonight's affair in the XCel Energy Center. It was exactly one year ago today when the Sabres shocked the hockey world, not so much by firing coach Ron Rolston and unpopular General Manager Darcy Regier, but by bringing back Nolan as the team's interim coach.

Nolan's return was brokered by Pat LaFontaine, who was hired as the president of hockey operations. LaFontaine, of course, didn't last in his spot. In March, he resigned to return to his former job in the NHL. At least that was the team's party line. Nolan's emotional reaction during those turbulent days matched sources' insistence that LaFontaine was fired in an organizational power struggle.

Nolan eventually made peace with his friend's departure and moved on, signing a three-year deal in May to coach the Sabres and shepherd their rebuilding under new General Manager Tim Murray.

"To look at this whole year and reflect on it, it kind of went by as a whirlwind tour," Nolan said at Braemar Arena. "But I'm certainly relishing this moment to help contribute in a small way to help turn this organization around."

While the prospect pool grows and the likelihood of a second straight top-two draft pick increases, progress has been virtually non-existent on the ice. The Sabres are 3-12-2, last in the NHL's overall standing, and are currently on pace to be the league's lowest-scoring team since the 1930s.

They've lost back-to-back 6-1 decisions to Pittsburgh and St. Louis and have suffered five-goal beatdowns in three of their last six outings. Strangely enough, Rolston never lost a game by that margin in his brief Buffalo career.

Nolan knows the numbers are pretty brutal since he took over. The team's record is just 20-48-11, with tonight's 80th game nearly the equivalent of a full 82-game season. The Sabres are just 11-48 in regulation – including 1-12 this year. On the road, they're 7-29-3.

Buffalo has been shut out in three of its last five games outside First Niagara Center and only Tyler Ennis' goal in the first minute of the third period Tuesday in St. Louis prevented a third straight road blanking and a fourth in that five-game stretch. The Ennis goal ended the Sabres' road scoring drought at 175 minutes, 2 seconds.

Nolan was happy his players showed some fight Tuesday after Ennis took a cheap shot from St. Louis' Ian Cole in the second period. He praised their willingness to battle as a team and he had them pushing hard Wednesday. Their uptempo practice lasted just over an hour, his voice often bouncing off the low ceiling of the home of the defending Minnesota high school state champion Edina Hornets.

"When things are going bad, people sometimes hush up and hope to get out of it," said Nolan, who is 56. "I'm the reverse. When things are tough, that's when you have to get a little bit more focused, more loud, start leading as well as you can."

Left in exile by the Sabres when Regier offered the reigning NHL Coach of the Year a one-year contract in the summer of 1997, Nolan longed for one more chance with the Sabres. Even as he weaved back through junior hockey, got another NHL shot with the New York Islanders and built upstart Latvia's program to where it nearly beat Canada in the Sochi Olympics, Buffalo was never far from his mind.

It was, however, far from where he was last year when he found out his dream could happen again. Nolan, you'll recall, was in Frankfurt, Germany, on the return from a session in Latvia when LaFontaine rang him with the Sabres offer. Nolan thought his old buddy and former player was coming through with some Broadway show tickets he was trying to get a hold of.

The LaFontaine-Nolan deal was arranged with owner Terry Pegula and the parties kept it all under wraps until the end of the Sabres' 3-2 shootout win over the eventual Stanley Cup champion Los Angeles Kings on Nov. 12. The next morning, Nolan and LaFontaine walked on the dais in the arena pavilion and a new era of Sabres hockey was born.

"I certainly had a lot of changes last year myself," joked winger Matt Moulson, who had been with the team just two weeks when everything went haywire that day. "I remember when Teddy was hired and speaking to guys who had played with him, it was interesting how many good things you heard, how everyone loved playing for him. And I've definitely enjoyed it. He was one of the reasons I was very interested in returning to Buffalo this year."

The Sabres outshot the Blues, 15-10, in the opening 20 minutes on Tuesday, and it was the kind of attacking play Nolan wants to see more of. It was the kind he had to have in mind when he got the news from LaFontaine a year ago.

"You go from that phone call from Frankfurt coming back from the Latvia team, getting ready for the Olympics and all of a sudden you come back to probably the one and only team you'd like to coach again if you had a chance to," Nolan said. "Here we are. We're in that situation now where we're kind of reloading, retooling and rebuilding this team."

"A lot of changes were made and for us as players, it made us really try to adjust the approach to the game," said defenseman Tyler Myers. "Everyone can tell it's still a process. We have to continue to try to do the right things. The group we have, with the coaching staff we have, we're doing what we can to try to keep pushing forward."

Nolan says he's ready for the challenge.

"History is a great tool," Nolan said. "The Pittsburgh Penguins certainly weren't the Pittsburgh Penguins 10 years ago. The Chicago Blackhawks weren't the Chicago Blackhawks 10 years ago. It takes time and it takes patience. And if you have the right patience and the right plan, great things happen."

Sabres notebook: Kaleta ready to hit the ice

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

November 12, 2014

EDINA, Minn. – Patrick Kaleta's long wait is apparently over. More than 13 months after his last NHL game, the Angola native is going to get back into the Buffalo Sabres' lineup tonight against the Minnesota Wild.

Coach Ted Nolan confirmed after practice Wednesday that Kaleta will return. It's uncertain whom he will replace.

"I'm itching and chomping at the bit to get in there and help my teammates," Kaleta told reporters before Nolan made his announcement. "Whenever they need me or call on me, of course I'll be ready."

Kaleta has not played since serving a 10-game suspension for an elbow to the head of Columbus' Jack Johnson on Oct. 10, 2013. The Sabres then waived him and Kaleta suffered a season-ending knee injury in November while playing for Rochester.

Kaleta would have made the Sabres out of camp this year but took a puck to the face Sept. 28 in Toronto and has missed all 17 games to date waiting for the damage to heal.

"I'll do my best to contribute in a positive way," Kaleta said. "I would have preferred to be in two weeks ago but that's what doctors are for. They have a profession and you have to listen to them."

Kaleta, who will wear a full face shield with tint to protect his face and eye, said he was thrilled to see the team come together Tuesday in a second-period scrum that saw every player on the ice race to the defense of Tyler Ennis following a late hit by St. Louis' Ian Cole.

"I was proud to see even the younger guys get in there and help out," Kaleta said. "That's the building block of building a good team. It's not rocket science. We haven't played our best. We haven't done our best out there. People who watch us and are fans deserve more and we have a lot more to give."

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Kaleta might go in the lineup for Nic Deslauriers, who drew Nolan's ire for a spear on St. Louis' Vladimir Tarasenko. The play drew a five-minute match penalty and the Blues scored three goals on the power play. Deslauriers will not incur further NHL discipline.

"I looked at the replay a little bit and the stick is more on his pants," Deslauriers said. "I went to bed yesterday to think about it. I'm not that kind of player. It's disappointing what happened."

"I said I liked his thought process but I didn't like his actions," Nolan said of his conversation with Deslauriers. "You can't be using the stick to spear people but the intent was there to help try to do something for the team. ... He just went about it the wrong way."

Nolan said Andre Benoit will move back in on defense because Josh Gorges (lower body) will sit out tonight. Gorges will get re-evaluated when the team returns home and there's some concern he may have a long-term injury. Jhonas Enroth will play goal.

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The Wild could get standout Zach Parise back from a concussion and this will mark their first game against Buffalo with former Sabres Jason Pominville and Thomas Vanek both in their lineup.

"It will be fun to see 'Van' again and it will be strange to play against both of them at the same time in the same game," said Tyler Myers. "We'll do everything we can to get a win out of it against them and get a bit of bragging rights."

The Wild have dropped four straight, including Tuesday's 3-1 decision at New Jersey. Vanek has just one goal on the season and said "I was awful" in the first 40 minutes Tuesday. Pominville has four goals, four assists thus far.

"I think it's always fun to have a chance to play those guys," Pominville told Wild beat reporters of the Sabres, whom he burned for two goals in two meetings last year. "Obviously there's some guys that I still know but there's a lot of new faces and different additions that they've made to the team. But it's always interesting when you play the team that you spent a lot of years with. Some great years, some good moments, some ups and downs and it's always fun."

Wild, Sabres try to end slumps

By Dan Myers

NHL.com

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SABRES (3-12-2) at WILD (7-7-0)

TV: MSG-B, BELL TV, FS-N, FS-WI

Season series: The Minnesota Wild swept two games against the Buffalo Sabres last season and are 4-1-2 in their past seven against Buffalo. Former Sabre Jason Pominville had one goal in each game to lead the Wild, the first and second games of his career against his old club.

Sabres team scope: Forwards Tyler Ennis and Cody McCormick sat out practice Wednesday in the Twin Cities, using it as a maintenance day. Sabers coach Ted Nolan indicated each will play Thursday. The same can't be said for defenseman Josh Gorges, who sustained a lower-body injury Tuesday in a 6-1 road loss to the St. Louis Blues. He did not practice Wednesday and is listed as day-to-day but has been ruled out against the Wild. Forward Patrick Kaleta is scheduled to return to the lineup after more than a year of rehab from a pair of injuries. Kaleta tore his ACL in the minors last November, then broke several bones in a preseason game on Sept. 28 when he blocked a slap shot with his face. This will be Kaleta's first game in the NHL since Oct. 10, 2013.

Wild team scope: Minnesota has lost four in a row, and it's no coincidence the slide has coincided with injuries to defenseman Jared Spurgeon and forward Zach Parise. Spurgeon, who has missed the past five games with a shoulder injury, is Minnesota's best offensive threat from the back end. Without him, the Wild have struggled to get much of anything going, scoring more than one goal in a game once in those five. Parise, Minnesota's leading scorer, has missed the past three games with a concussion; the Wild have scored a total of two goals in that span. The good news for the Wild: Each skated in practice Wednesday, and Spurgeon is likely to return against the Sabres. Wild coach Mike Yeo classified Parise as "doubtful" for Thursday but didn't rule him out completely, though a return Saturday against the Dallas Stars seems more likely. Minnesota also recalled forward Jordan Schroeder and defenseman Stu Bickel from Iowa of the American Hockey League on Wednesday. Defenseman Jonathon Blum and forward Stephane Veilleux to Iowa.

Unorthodox Hasek dominated on way to Hall of Fame

By Kevin Wodley

NHL.com

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If the awards and records don't say it, the nickname certainly does.

Dominik Hasek was known as The Dominator for good reason.

At the peak of a career that will see the 49-year-old inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame on Monday, Nov. 17, Hasek won six Vezina and two Hart trophies with the Buffalo Sabres and a gold medal with the Czech Republic at the 1998 Nagano Olympics, the first with NHL participation. He added two Stanley Cups with the Detroit Red Wings before retiring with the highest NHL career save percentage at .922.

Perhaps the only thing more remarkable than Hasek's often-dominant career is how close it came to never happening. Arguably the best to play the position, Hasek came really close to not doing so in the NHL.

Not only did Hasek contemplate a return to the Czech Republic after bouncing back and forth between the minor leagues and playing only 25 games over his first two seasons with the Chicago Blackhawks, but after a 1992 trade to the Buffalo Sabres he was left unprotected and went unclaimed in the NHL Expansion Draft in 1993.

Hasek won his first Vezina Trophy the following season.

So how does that happen? How can a goaltender get passed over for six others in the summer and then immediately post the first of five seasons with a save percentage of .930 or better?

Hasek's unique and often-misunderstood style played a role.

"I think probably it was really the unique manner in which he played," said Washington Capitals goaltending coach Mitch Korn, who was in Buffalo when Hasek arrived until leaving for the Nashville Predators in 1998.

"Everybody thought it was a gamble at the time."

Hasek had already dominated in his native Czechoslovakia, playing in the top professional league at the age of 16, and winning two championships, three MVPs and five straight goaltender of the year awards over nine seasons before finally joining a Blackhawks team that picked him 199th in the 1983 NHL Draft. But when he finally arrived in North America seven years later, it was the unique way he played the position that stood out the most. Hasek would roll on his back across the crease, drop his stick to pick up the puck with his blocker, and charge out of his crease on breakaways.

The way he played the position didn't look like anyone else, but there was a method behind that madness.

"Goaltending is a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle," Korn said, "And Dom is the only guy I have ever met that had every piece and eventually they were all in place. A lot of NHL guys probably have 800 pieces, but Dom had all 1,000 pieces."

Jim Corsi, who was the goaltending coach in Buffalo for Hasek's final two Vezina Trophy season, agreed Hasek's NHL arrival was delayed because he "did not look like the norm." But Corsi said Hasek actually used many of the skills common to goalies today. He just combined them in a way that made it harder for most to recognize.

"The reality was his play was called unorthodox only because he was one of the first guys to really marry athleticism and cleverness with a variety of skills," Corsi said. "We had gone to a way where our skill set was a defining thing: This guy was a standup goalie, that guy was a butterfly goalie, and that was it. One of the

beauties of Dom's game was that he also read the game like (Martin) Brodeur and (Patrick) Roy and the greats, but the defining distinction was he had a skill set that went from the guy who reacted to the puck, to the guy who blocked the net, to the guy who interrupted a play before it even got dangerous. It was a devastating combination."

The highlights of Hasek's incredible skill set included Gumby-like flexibility and the ability to read pucks off a stick. His greatest strength, though, was his ability to anticipate the play. The ease with which he was able to contort a lithe 5-foot-11, 177-pound frame into don't-try-this-at-home positions may have dominated highlight reels, but Hasek's intelligence was the key.

"He played hockey as if it was a chess game. He knew what was going to happen next," Korn said. "The only problem when we first got Dom is he was two moves ahead, but like a poor poker player he would sometimes show his hand."

Hasek was sometimes so far ahead he gave shooters a chance to change their mind. With patience came dominance.

An injury to Fuhr early in 1993-94 opened the door for Hasek, and he stuck his foot in firmly with five shutouts during a one month stretch that started in mid-November. By the end of that season Hasek had a .930 save percentage, his first Vezina Trophy as the NHL's top goaltender, and a share of the William Jennings Trophy with Fuhr for the League's best goals-against average. Hasek was also runner up for the Hart Trophy as MVP, and three seasons later he became the first goalie since Jacques Plante in 1962 to win it.

Hasek won the Hart Trophy again in 1998, becoming the first goalie to win it twice. He also won the Ted Lindsay Award as the most valuable player as selected by the players, and won his fourth Vezina Trophy in five years. He added a fifth Vezina in 1999 with a career-best 1.87 goals-against average and .937 save percentage, was again a finalist for the Hart and Lindsay trophies and led the Sabres to the Stanley Cup Final, where they lost to the Dallas Stars.

After backstopping an often overmatched Buffalo team for eight seasons, Hasek orchestrated a trade to the loaded Detroit Red Wings in 2001-02, finishing with a career high 41 wins and winning his first Stanley Cup.

If anyone thought it came easy, that the acrobatic nature of Hasek's highlight reel saves was all instinctive, long-time Red Wings goaltending coach Jim Bedard begs to differ. He got to see firsthand just how hard Hasek worked at his craft.

"In practice, I tell people my job was more to find ways to get him off the ice, he wanted to work so long," Bedard said. "I'd say, 'Dom we got three in four on the road, let's not leave it all out on the ice in practice,' and he'd say, 'OK Jimmy, give me one more drill that's going to really, really push me.' And then when he'd try to go to the bench after he was so buckled over he'd miss the door because that's how gassed he was. He'd be drooling like a Saint Bernard."

Bedard got to appreciate the skills and technical elements that made Hasek so good, and how hard he worked to keep them sharp. It started with his skating and active hands that stayed out front and wider than most, especially in an era when goalies were starting to lock them up at their sides with more of a blocking butterfly.

"You would see Dom skate in a sweat suit and he looked like he just started skating a week ago, but put him in goalie skates in that little crease and he was the most graceful thing I had ever seen," Bedard said. "When he was in his crouch I would see guys come down the wing in practice and he was barely outside his crease and there was no net. Guys would cut to the middle; there was no net. Guys would cut to the other side; there was no net. He never got out of position, his hips always stayed down and forward, his hands were always up. It was unbelievable. Some guys wouldn't even shoot the puck. They would just get back in line because they knew there was nothing."

Unless he showed them something on purpose. Hasek was known to play head games, baiting shooters by showing a little space where he thought they'd be looking to shoot, then taking it away.

"You have to be smart," Hasek told NHL.com late in his career. "If you give them something to shoot at, you can set them up for failure."

Hasek retired after winning the Stanley Cup in 2002 but returned a year later and, after an injury-plagued season in Detroit, signed with the Ottawa Senators in 2005-06. He only played one season in Ottawa before rejoining the Red Wings for his final two seasons, winning the Stanley Cup for a second time as Chris Osgood's backup in 2008. But Hasek left an impression on Senators rookie backup Ray Emery, who recognized the method in all the madness that Hasek was so famous for, including those wild-looking charges out of the crease on breakaways.

It was rarely, if ever, an uncalculated gamble. It was another game of chess for Hasek, who anticipated the moment a forward would look down to make sure the puck was settled and made sure by the time that player looked up Hasek was already on top of him.

"He reads plays and that's why you'll see sometimes he'll come flying out if he sees a guy on a breakaway has his head down, or if a guy is cutting down the wing, he'll cut that lane off between the D-man and the near post," Emery told NHL.com that season. "These things are all calculated, it's not like he's just flopping around in there."

No, but it looked that way, to the point Hasek almost never got a chance to start his Hall of Fame career in the NHL.

Unmasked: More than luck in Hasek's barrel roll

By Kevin Wodley

NHL.com

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Of all the incredible saves Dominik Hasek made during a two-decade career that earned induction into the Hockey Hall of Fame, perhaps none was more famous than the barrel roll.

Also known as the drop and roll or the Hasek Roll, it was a signature move for a goaltender known as "The Dominator."

It also was widely misunderstood and improperly characterized as an act of desperate athleticism, or worse, a lucky save. It was anything but.

Many of Hasek's saves were easily dismissed as unorthodox flopping, but there was a method to the madness. Much of it was based on the same principles of taking away time and filling space that make up modern goaltending instruction but were emerging themes in the early-1990s when Hasek debuted in the League.

Hasek may have implemented them differently, but they were part of a preplanned system. The barrel roll was a save selection practiced for decades and intended for a specific situation.

"I was doing it in '80s, I do it in '90s, I do it in this century, it's nothing new," Hasek told NHL.com late in his career. "I know I was doing it in the Czech Republic in the '80s, and I don't know if some older goalie taught me or if I [had] seen it. It was too many years ago."

Hasek used it on breakaways, including against Eric Lindros to win a shootout for the Czech Republic against Canada at the 1998 Nagano Olympics, but most often the barrel roll was reserved for a forward cutting in alone in tight from Hasek's left to right. Hasek would extend his blocker and stick to force the shooter to hold the puck out and away from him, knowing they couldn't raise a shot with their hands extended.

From there, Hasek continued this extension to the post by rolling over on his back and throwing his glove-side arm along the ice. Hasek then kicked his legs straight up to try to take away the top of the net in case the shooter had the patience to try to wait him out. In the end, it looked like a bizarro-world butterfly, with Hasek's arms extended along the ice to take away the bottom of the net and his legs up in the air acting like a torso would in a normal butterfly.

"When he's coming from my left side and he makes the move far around the net, it's just one of these you do because this is the only way to stop that puck," Hasek said. "I know I do it in certain situations, but you don't think about it. It just comes if you see a forward move farther and farther and nobody stops him. And if there's nobody to help, I have to do it myself, so the two pads go up. You have to be smart with what you're doing. I never really change my style at all, but it's the practice, it's the way you read the game; you have to know when you can do it. It's something that is hard to describe or explain."

Few tried to when it came to Hasek, but Jim Corsi, who was Buffalo Sabres goalie coach when Hasek won his final two Vezina trophies (1999, 2001), recognized the technical components in the barrel roll.

It was easy to brush off as a fluke if you saw it executed once, but after watching Hasek use it repeatedly, the same way in the same save situations each time, it was plain to see it was planned.

"I used to call it the drop and roll," Corsi said. "A lot of people thought it was luck, but the reality is it was all strategy. I'd see him do it to five different players in five similar situations and it was identical."

Corsi referred to it as a bait-and-trap save.

"He would allow the player to think there was room on the other side, but because he forced them to extend their hands, they couldn't lift the puck, so they had to sweep it in," Corsi said. "Invariably he would roll his other hand down to the goal post and they'd be like, 'Lucky guy, I put it right in his glove.' No, no, no, he was waiting for you."

Hasek's style wasn't easily labeled as stand-up, butterfly or read-and-react because he combined elements of all three, which often made those components harder to identify.

"What's gone is that he has taken the mold of a blocking skill, which is primarily the butterfly or the old two-pad stack, and he's allowed it to be part of the reactionary skill with a bait-and-trap," Corsi said. "He would draw you into an area, but he would be there waiting with you with a blocking save. It is not an easy thing to teach."

That may explain why few Hasek innovations are widely recognized in the same manner Patrick Roy is credited for revolutionizing the butterfly. Corsi, though, said there are many technical elements in Hasek's game prevalent today.

Detroit Red Wings goaltending coach Jim Bedard could only chuckle when the vertical-horizontal (VH) technique became a popular tactic for dealing with sharp-angle chances, with goalies loading the lead pad against the post and leaving the back pad flat along the goal line. Bedard had seen it before.

"I saw Dom do that 15 years ago," Bedard said. "Guys would come around the corner with a left-hand shot going to his glove side and he would plant his one pad up against the post and he would be right behind it and it worked. When people were talking about it again, I was like, 'I saw this a long time ago with Dom.' When you see him every day, you appreciated how he played, how he kept his hands and how he kept his feet and how he got to the middle of the net."

There are elements of Hasek's game Bedard has transferred to Red Wings Chris Osgood, Jimmy Howard and Jonas Gustavsson.

"I see goalies in the summer and the first thing I say to them is, 'The ice is your friend,' and I explain how Dom skates like he was on rollers," Bedard said. "Use your edges to your advantage, don't let your edges wear you out; we're not trying to get down to the cement here."

Corsi said he sees elements of Hasek's paddle-down play today.

"I have often said Dom is one of the defining-moment goaltenders like Jacques Plante and Patrick Roy, who changed the way the game was played," Corsi said. "Paddle down, one-knee down, drop and roll, the use of his stick as an interference as opposed to just a simple pokecheck, that's all new, that's all stuff he did, that was him."

With Hasek you just had to look a little harder to spot those elements and innovation, sometimes even in the middle of a barrel roll.

Buffalo's Tyler Myers still has a ton of potential and that's why teams are interested

By Ryan Kennedy

The Hockey News

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That the Buffalo Sabres are struggling this season is no surprise. Are they a bit worse than anticipated? For now, yes. But it's not like the team is devoid of talent. We know the organization has a lot of potential wrapped up in its youth and even though he's a little older, towering defenseman Tyler Myers still has a lot of upside.

"He's just a great talent," said Josh Gorges. "You think of guys who are 6-foot-7, you think of guys who are not mobile; they're big, kinda clunky. But his ability to skate, handle the puck, make plays – he's a great talent and I've been lucky to play with him."

For the record, Myers is actually listed at 6-foot-8, but his new defense partner can be forgiven for the slight – the dude's tall, that's the bottom line. And there's a lot of love between the two, even if their partnership has been forged in the fires of rebuild hell.

"He's been the ultimate veteran to learn from," Myers said. "As soon as he came in he had a leadership presence and he's continued that ever since. He's a guy I look up to and any chance I get to learn from him, I'll take advantage."

The two actually have a deeper background together. Both are alumni of the Western League's Kelowna Rockets and the two are part of a big cohort of NHLers who train in the picturesque British Columbia locale in the summer.

Gorges was a big acquisition for the Sabres over the summer and even if the Sabres have been getting blown up left and right this season, a look at the fancy stats will tell you that he and Myers are doing their best to keep the ship afloat. They are in a class by themselves on the team in terms of hard minutes and even though nobody really uses plus-minus anymore, Myers is "only" minus-7, which is the best for any Sabres D-man who has played 10 games or more. He's also logging nearly 25 minutes a game, which is three full minutes more than Gorges in second place. That includes top-pairing penalty-kill time (Gorges edges him out by three seconds per game there) and power play time (only forward Tyler Ennis has played more).

So it's probably no surprise that Myers has been named in trade rumors. Detroit has been offered as a destination and on a team where he wouldn't have to do so much heavy lifting, it does seem like a fit. But Myers, like most players, prefers to live in the here and now.

"That stuff doesn't bother me," he said. "I know there are teams interested but as of right now I'm a Buffalo Sabre and that's where my focus is."

Sabres' Patrick Kaleta to make season debut

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

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Buffalo Sabres winger Patrick Kaleta will make his season debut tonight against the Wild, coach Ted Nolan told reporters Wednesday in Minnesota.

Kaleta hasn't played an NHL game since Oct. 10, 2013. The team's old regime banished the agitator to the minors following a suspension early last season. He tore his ACL weeks later. Kaleta took a puck to the face during a Sept. 28 preseason game.

Meanwhile, defenseman Josh Gorges, who suffered a lower-body injury in Tuesday's 6-1 loss in St. Louis, is out tonight. Nolan said he will be evaluated when the Sabres return home. Andre Benoit will replace Gorges.

Nolan said goalie Jhonas Enroth will start tonight.

Sabres' Deslauriers regrets spearing incident

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

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Edina, MN (WGR 550) -- I think we've seen enough of Nic Deslauriers to know he'll do anything for his team and anything for a teammate.

At the end of the game in St. Louis, Deslauriers took exception to Ian Cole and Alexander Steen going after Tyler Ennis.

Deslauriers started cross checking and going after one of the Blues best players in Vladimir Tarasenko. As they went down the ice Deslauriers speared the Russian and got a match penalty. St. Louis scored three times and won 6-1. The big winger said, "I made a mistake there. I didn't think I hit him that hard, I just wanted to act for the boys. They went after one of our top guys so I just wanted to spear up the energy. I looked at the replay and it was more on the pants, so just waiting to see what happens."

As of Wednesday afternoon, Deslauriers had not heard from the NHL.

The incident obviously bothered the young winger. He said, "I went to bed and thought about it, I'm not that kind of player and it's disappointing what happened, but now it's a new day. I got caught in the moment and I'm not that kind of player, I don't want to hurt nobody, it's about being mature as a young player and trying to make the big steps and I think I took a couple of steps back after that."

Ted Nolan likes to see good, tough hockey and really liked how his team stuck together. Nolan didn't like what Deslauriers did, "I talked to him last night and said I liked his thought process, but I didn't like his actions. He can't be using the stick to spear people, but the intent was there to try to do something about a team taking advantage of one of our players, but he just went about it the wrong way."

The Sabres practiced in Edina High School's home rink. Josh Gorges was in the building for practice but was walking without bending his leg. Nolan said, "When we get back home he'll get reevaluated by our doctors and we'll just keep our fingers crossed and hope that it's not too bad." Andre Benoit will take his place in the lineup.

Both Tyler Ennis and Cody McCormick were banged up and given the day off, but Nolan said both will play Thursday.

Pat Kaleta is going to play his first game of the season after having his face demolished in a preseason game.

Jhonas Enroth gets the call in goal.

Kaleta set to return Thursday

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

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EDINA, MINNESOTA – Patrick Kaleta has been itching to play for a long time now.

He sustained a major knee injury a year ago in the American Hockey League and was ready to go for training camp in September. However, he suffered another setback in a preseason game on Sept. 28, when he was hit in the face with a slap shot and needed surgery to repair the damage.

Thursday night, he'll play in his first NHL game since Oct. 10, 2013.

"Whenever they need me or call on me, of course I'll be ready," he said after practice Wednesday at Braemar Arena, home of the 12-time high school state-champion Edina Hornets.

"I've been waiting to play my first real game for like 13 months now. So whatever the team needs me to do to be a positive around here, I'll do it when I'm called upon. I'll do my best to contribute in a positive way."

Sabres coach Ted Nolan said that Kaleta would be back in the Sabres' lineup when they take on the Minnesota Wild at Xcel Energy Center. He did not say which forward would be a healthy scratch.

The surgery required doctors to insert three plates and 14 screws into the right side of Kaleta's face. He's had to retrain his facial muscles and said he's still had trouble adjusting to some lighting because the incision was made near his right eyelid.

Kaleta will wear a jaw protector with a tinted shield to deal with it. He also had his friend Fred Jackson, the Buffalo Bills running back, give him some eye black strips that may help reduce glare.

DEFENSIVE SUBSTITUTION

One new pairing on the blue line was put together out of necessity. Andre Benoit lined up next to Tyler Myers because Josh Gorges sustained a lower-body injury Tuesday night in St. Louis. Gorges has been ruled out against the Wild.

Nolan said that Gorges will remain with the team on the trip and be re-evaluated on Friday when the Sabres return to Buffalo.

THE RESPONSE

At forward, Cody McCormick and Tyler Ennis were given maintenance days. Nolan said both will play against Minnesota. He also said that Jhonas Enroth will start in goal.

Ennis took a late hit during the game against St. Louis that caused a few scraps to break out right away. Both Ennis and rookie defenseman Nikita Zadorov received their first career fighting majors as a result of the play. The team kept up their physical play as the game went on.

Kaleta likes to play at a high tempo and that type of scrum is one he thrives upon. While he couldn't be in there for that one, he said that his team's response was the right response for the situation.

"When you look at trying to find the positives of losing 6-1, people say everything is negative but the way we came together as a team out there, I was proud to see even the younger guys get in there and help out," he said.

"That's a building block of building a good team. It's not rocket science; we haven't played our best. We haven't done our best out there and people who watch us and our fans deserve more. And we have a lot more to give.

"But to take a positive out of last night was seeing the guys come together, battle together, stick up for each other and I was really proud of some of the guys and be proud to be a part of that team"

The way the team answered the call reminded Nolan of his early days coaching the team in the mid-'90s. He referenced a game in Philadelphia when the Flyers planned to take some liberties and the Sabres held their own. He said that moment helped bring the team closer together and forge their identity.

He hopes the same thing will happen to this year's team because of what happened Tuesday.

"That's how teams are built and families are built – by having each other's back and standing up for one another," Nolan said. "Hopefully we'll look back on this in a little while and say, 'Hey, that was a turning point.'"

RAW EMOTION

In the loss on Tuesday, Nicolas Deslauriers was given a match penalty for spearing Vladimir Tarasenko with 5:42 left in regulation. The Blues went on a five-minute power play and scored three times to truly put the game away. Because of the hit on Ennis, Deslauriers was trying to stir things up a little bit with one of St. Louis' best players.

Deslauriers said he spent most of the night reflecting on the incident, watching it over and over again.

"I was caught in the moment. I'm not that kind of player," Deslauriers said. "I don't want to hurt anybody."

Nolan talked to Deslauriers about the incident. While Nolan liked that Deslauriers wanted to help his team, spearing another player was definitely not the right course of action.

"The intent was there to try to do something about a team taking advantage of one of our players, but he just went about it the wrong way," Nolan said.

Deslauriers said he hadn't heard anything from the NHL about the penalty.

WEDNESDAY'S PRACTICE

26 Matt Moulson – 28 Zemgus Girgensons – 36 Patrick Kaleta

65 Brian Flynn – 17 Torrey Mitchell – 12 Brian Gionta

82 Marcus Foligno – 21 Drew Stafford – 80 Chris Stewart

44 Nicolas Deslauriers – 19 Cody Hodgson

61 Andre Benoit – 57 Tyler Myers

51 Nikita Zadorov – 55 Rasmus Ristolainen

6 Mike Weber – 24 Tyson Strachan

41 Andrej Meszaros

1 Jhonas Enroth

34 Michal Neuvirth

Did Not Skate: 4 Josh Gorges, 8 Cody McCormick, 63 Tyler Ennis