



Buffalo Sabres

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Sharks-Sabres preview

By Jeff Mezydlo

Associated Press

November 17, 2014

Victories have been hard to come by for the Buffalo Sabres since the start of last season. That hasn't been the case when they've faced the San Jose Sharks in recent years, however. [by OddsShark.com](#)

The Sabres can post back-to-back wins for the first time in 2014-15 with an eighth consecutive victory over the visiting Sharks on Tuesday night.

Buffalo (4-13-2) had a league-low 21 wins last season and has the fewest so far in this one. Two of those victories in 2013-14 and the Sabres' first in regulation this season, though, came against San Jose (10-8-2), which is 0-6-1 in the last seven meetings.

"I think it's important ... to know that we can work hard and compete with any team in the league. That's a good team," forward Cody Hodgson told the NHL's official website after the 2-1 victory at San Jose on Oct. 25.

The Sabres are 15-1-0 all-time against the Sharks at home, and have totaled 19 goals in the four meetings there since San Jose won 5-0 at Buffalo on Dec. 2, 2005.

The Sabres recorded eight goals during an 0-4-1 slide that ended when they scored a season high in Saturday's 6-2 home victory over Toronto. Zemgus Girgensons had two goals and Matt Moulson and Tyler Ennis each had one with two assists for the Sabres, who haven't won two straight since a three-game run Feb. 25-28.

"It was 10 times better than what we've done," said Girgensons, who has four goals and two assists in five games. "We have to keep improving."

Buffalo allowed six goals each time in three straight contests before Michal Neuvirth made 32 saves Saturday, helping his team kill all four penalties after its previous three opponents went 7 for 17.

"It was a huge character win for us," defenseman Tyler Myers said. "It's something we have to try to make a habit of moving forward."

"We've struggled a little bit and (Saturday) was a huge stepping stone."

Neuvirth stopped 29 shots and Hodgson and Nicolas Deslauriers scored third-period goals at San Jose last month.

The Sharks improved to 3-3-0 on a seven-game trip with Sunday's 2-0 victory over Carolina.

"We've been on the road for a long, long time but we're weathering the storm and hopefully when it's done we can go home and play well at home," said center Joe Thornton, who has four goals and three assists on the trip.

Tomas Hertl scored his fourth, Thornton added an empty netter and Troy Grosenick made 45 saves to become the 22nd goaltender to record a shutout in his first start.

"It doesn't matter how long you've been in the league, you get excited to see young players come in and do well," Thornton said. "You get excited yourself. It was nice to get the win."

The Sharks are one of the top teams in the league on the power play at 22.6 percent, but they've gone 0 for 9 while splitting the last four games. They are 1 for 25 in the past eight against Buffalo.

Thornton has no goals and two assists during the seven-game slide in the series.

Including his time with Vancouver, Hodgson has five goals and two assists in his last six against San Jose.

Girgensons leading Sabres' offensive revival

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

November 17, 2014

Lo and behold, the Buffalo Sabres actually have an offense.

The Sabres head into tonight's game against the San Jose Sharks in First Niagara Center with 10 goals and plenty of scoring chances over their last three games. They're coming off Saturday's 6-2 win over Toronto that was their biggest offensive output in nearly two years.

At the center of it all on their newly-formed top line is 20-year-old Zemgus Girgensons, who is in the breakout stretch of his young NHL career.

Girgensons has seven points, including four goals, in his last seven games. He's got back-to-back two-point games, a first by a Buffalo player this year and a first in his career. The Latvian is second to Tyler Ennis among Buffalo forwards in ice time with an average of 17:39 per game. And since getting put on a line with Ennis and Matt Moulson, Girgensons is finding plenty of open ice.

Girgensons had a breakaway chance foiled last Tuesday in St. Louis, scored a quick goal Thursday in Minnesota just 10 seconds after a Wild tally and burned the Leafs for two goals Saturday, one short-handed and the other on a nifty breakaway deke.

"It's just a case of getting the chances," Girgensons said Monday. "Playing with Moulson and Ennis has opened up a lot of ice and given us a lot of opportunities to score. There's a time where you can catch the other team off their guard, a little bit flat-footed. You can really get some good opportunities that way and that's what I've been doing."

It's no secret coach Ted Nolan loves Girgensons, who played for him on the Latvian team in the Sochi Olympics. He routinely references Girgensons in news conferences even when he's asked about other players. "He watches film very, very closely. He practices very intensely," Nolan said Monday of his star pupil. "Successful people practice their craft a lot, and he practices for sure. He's only 20. That's the beauty of the whole thing. And his maturity is that of a 24 or 25-year-old."

Since the line was put together three games ago, Girgensons has three goals and an assist, Moulson has a goal and four assists and Ennis has two goals and three assists. Those are top-line numbers. "Every team in the league has one," Nolan said. "Those players lead the way for you. It took awhile for us to find ours, but we've got one going pretty good now. Everybody else feeds off that."

"It's fun and we've got some good chemistry on our line," Ennis said. "Zemgus is an extremely hard worker, has a lot of talent. He plays like he's 28 years old. It's surprising when you realize how young he is. He's got a veteran presence with how hard he works, how he comes to the rink every day. He's a fun kid to play with."

The line has been a boon for Moulson, who struggled under the weight of his \$25-million free agent contract and had just one point in his previous nine games.

"We've been generating some chances, playing better in our own end and coming out cleaner," Moulson said. "That definitely helps generate offense when you do that. It starts in the D zone. Zemgus has been down low working hard. He's a pretty complete player, one of our best defensive players as well. From where he was even last year when he played well, he seems to keep improving. He works extremely hard. It's not a coincidence he keeps getting better."

Girgensons has six goals and four assists thus far this season, tied with Ennis for the team lead in goals and third in points. He had eight goals and 14 assists in 70 games last year and six goals in 61 games for Rochester in 2012-13.

"Our goal average before this run was something pretty ridiculous," Girgensons noted. "It was just about time for some guys to open up and for us to get some goals. Our line played a little bit together last season and it went well, and it seems to be working again."

Ten goals in three games is obviously quite a luxury for this team.

The Sabres had just 10 in their first 10 games and thus became the NHL's lowest-scoring team in that opening stretch since 1936.

"I'm a big believer in percentages," Moulson said. "They have to swing your way if you're generating shots and chances. It was nice to have that last game and we want to build on that."

"Guys were doing the right things," Nolan said. "You do the right things, once in a while that offensive burst will happen."

Sabres notebook: Zadorov looks like he'll stay put

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

November 17, 2014

Forget the KHL or the OHL. It looks like the only league Nikita Zadorov is playing in this season is the NHL.

The Buffalo Sabres have pretty much made the call on the 19-year-old Zadorov staying with their defense corps, as he reaches his ninth game of the season tonight against San Jose. His 10th game would be Thursday against the New York Rangers and that would kick in the first-year of his entry-level contract. "I try not to assume, but I'm more than positive he's earned his keep," coach Ted Nolan said after practice Monday.

"He was benched and scratched at the rookie camp at Traverse City, so no one gave him the benefit of the doubt of making this team. We worked at it. We worked with him."

Zadorov's work, both with his off-ice conditioning and his play on the ice, has paid off to date. He's averaged 20 minutes, 15 seconds over his last four games, the start of his pairing with fellow 2013 first-round pick Rasmus Ristolainen, and has a plus-3 rating for the season.

Nolan's thought pretty much mirrors what General Manager Tim Murray told The Buffalo News prior to Saturday night's game against Toronto when he said he was "leaning" toward keeping Zadorov.

Murray sent No. 2 overall pick Sam Reinhart back to juniors earlier this month with Kootenay of the Western Hockey League.

"It's different with Sam," Murray said. "I have no problem with Zadorov staying here and burning a year of his contract. That doesn't bother me. Even though we're not a great team, he's getting a lot of experience in tough situations. So far he's handled that very well. Up to this point, I would say I'm pleased."

Zadorov only played one game for the Sabres in October, as the team was trying to forge an agreement that would have allowed him to return to the OHL's London Knights.

Zadorov and his agent were not interested in London, and were trying to get a deal in the KHL, but the Sabres weren't interested in that arrangement.

Zadorov finally cracked the lineup for the Nov. 2 shootout win over Detroit and has been a fixture since.

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The Sabres will, of course, monitor the weather as the forecasted lake-effect snowstorm hits town today, but the NHL schedule doesn't leave much wriggle room for a postponement.

First off, the Sharks arrived in town late Sunday after their 2-0 win over the Carolina Hurricanes in Raleigh. The presence of the visiting team and officials usually means games go on as scheduled. And tonight's game is also slated to be a national telecast on NBC Sports Network.

If a decision is made to postpone the game, it can't be made up Wednesday because the Sharks are scheduled to play a home game Thursday night against Florida. San Jose doesn't come back East until late March, for a six-game roadie following a trip to Winnipeg.

The teams have common off days March 24-25, but it's a busy stretch for both so neither would be much interested in a makeup.

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The Sharks have lost seven straight games to the Sabres, including a 2-1 decision Oct. 25 at SAP Center that was Buffalo's only regulation win until Saturday's blowout of Toronto.

The Sharks haven't beaten Buffalo since a 5-2 win in San Jose on Jan. 23, 2010 and have really struggled on the road against the Sabres. Buffalo is 15-1-0 here all-time against San Jose, winning the last three meetings and suffering its only loss, 5-0, on Dec. 2, 2005 in Joe Thornton's first game with the Sharks after being traded from Boston. "I didn't know about that record until somebody pointed it out to me the last game in San Jose," said Nolan, who has coached the last two victories. "For whatever reason, we got the lucky breaks those particular nights."

The Sharks will be playing the finale of a seven-game, 11-day road trip. They are 3-3 in the first six games and are coming off Sunday's 2-0 win in Carolina where goalie Troy Grosenick, a 2012 Hobey Baker finalist at Union College in Schenectady, made 45 saves to post a shutout in his NHL debut. The 45 saves are a NHL record in a shutout debut in the NHL's expansion era. The previous record of 41 was set by Boston's Andre Gill in 1967.

Ex-Sabre 'Dominator' Hasek inducted into Hockey Hall of Fame

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

November 17, 2014

TORONTO – Bill McCreary, like the rest of the hockey world, was eagerly anticipating the 1998 Nagano Olympics. NHL players were set to compete for the first time, and the longtime referee was chatting with his fellow officials about the favorites during their flight to Japan.

One linesman was adamant he knew the winner. He insisted Czech Republic – an underdog – would definitely take the gold. Why?

Dominik Hasek.

"That's how much respect he had in the industry, and that's how great he was," said McCreary, who joined Hasek, Mike Modano, Peter Forsberg, Rob Blake and Pat Burns in being inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame on Monday night.

Hasek did indeed lead his country to the gold medal, a moment that remains one of the goaltender's favorites.

"Nagano was definitely No. 1, with winning my first Stanley Cup in 2002," said Hasek, who starred for the Buffalo Sabres from 1992 to 2001. "The fans and the people in Buffalo supported me through every success I had. The welcome Richard Smehlik and I received after we returned from Nagano with an Olympic gold medal made me feel like we were bringing the gold back home, not into a foreign country."

Buffalo and the Sabres played a big part in Hasek's induction speech. He thanked Seymour and Northrup Knox, Larry Quinn, Lindy Ruff, former teammates Dale Hawerchuk, Pat LaFontaine, Michael Peca and Alexei Zhitnik, plus members of the equipment and public relations staffs.

"The things that he was able to do captivated the city," LaFontaine, who sat next to Peca in the audience, said during a prerecorded introduction. "It's an amazing sports town, and the sports figures are loved. Dominik was one of those icon sports figures and always will be in Buffalo."

Hasek also thanked teammates and coaches from Chicago and Detroit. Chris Chelios, who played in both cities, presented Hasek with his plaque.

"I came to the States in 1990 to Chicago, and I was dreaming about one day being a starting goalie in the NHL," Hasek said. "My goal was to become a starting goalie. I honestly never dreamed about being a Vezina Trophy winner and at one time to be inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame. It's like a dream, seriously."

Hasek made the Hall of Fame a reality with a record-setting career that is filled with highlight-reel saves.

The Dominator flopped, kicked and rolled his way to six Vezina Trophies, two Stanley Cups and the best save percentage (.922) and goals-against average (2.20) in NHL history among goalies with 500 games played.

Hasek also won the Hart Trophy twice – in 1997 and 1998 – as the league's most valuable player.

"Fantastic goalie," Forsberg said. "He read the play so well. When you looked up, he was already there. He could see the game so well, see the play develop, and I think that was his best attribute."

Hasek's keen hockey mind was matched by a body that could contort in unimaginable ways. It allowed his unorthodox style to work.

"Sometimes it was difficult to listen to people that my style is not good," Hasek said, "but I'm glad I could prove that my style is good enough."

Hasek's game was on display from 1981 to 2011. The 49-year-old starred in the Czech League before coming to the NHL and finishing in Russia's Kontinental Hockey League.

His induction would have come years ago had he followed through on his multiple retirements, which started in 2002.

"It was sort of easy to retire, but after a few months without hockey I decided three times to come back just for the love of the game," Hasek said. "I don't have any regrets to retire once or twice just because I felt a little bit tired. After a few months without hockey, I felt like I should come back."

"Anytime I came back, whether it was North America or even one more time in Europe, I felt like I still played great hockey and contributed."

Hasek's plaque hangs on the top row in the Great Hall. It faces the Masterton and Lady Byng trophies, is above McCreary and next to 2013 inductee Scott Niedermayer.

He shares a wall with Eddie Belfour, the Chicago goalie he needed to get away from in order to enhance his career.

"I was very lucky," Hasek said. "I was lucky to be traded from Chicago to Buffalo. I became a starting goalie, had support of the organization. Then later to play on the Detroit Red Wings team with so many Hall of Famers, I have no regrets with what I've done through my career."

Murray setting table for Nolan's dismissal?

By Bucky Gleason

Buffalo News

November 17, 2014

Sabres GM Tim Murray didn't come out and say as much during his interview with The News' Mike Harrington for a column that appeared Sunday but it sure seemed as if he was setting the table to fire coach Ted Nolan. In fact, there are several reasons Nolan could be sent packing long before his three-year contract expires in 2016-17.

Murray sounded as if he gave Nolan full authority to hire his own assistant coaches, but that's often the case with head coaches. Many have language written into their contracts that they're free to assemble their own staffs. Nolan hired seven-time Stanley Cup winner Bryan Trottier, longtime associates Danny Flynn and Tom Coolen and goaltending coach Arturs Irbe.

"Have they got the most out of these players?" Murray said to Harrington. "I don't think they have. Do they think they have? I don't believe that either. I don't go to Teddy every day and say, 'You're OK.' I don't steer clear, but I'm not micromanaging him or his staff. He got the staff he wanted, and I'm going to let them do their jobs. At the end of the day, we'll see what kind of development there is."

So much for support.

And that's where it comes back to Murray. He ultimately determines how much a player develops. He makes assessments based on his own expectations. Murray can easily push the results aside, knowing darned well a team he put together was built FOR last rather than built TO last, and conclude the coaching staff didn't do enough to push players forward. He has that authority.

But for Murray to say the Sabres are better than last year was grossly inaccurate. He traded Ryan Miller and Steve Ott just before the deadline and bought out Christian Ehrhoff in the offseason. His free-agents signings included Brian Gionta, Matt Moulson, Andrej Meszaros, Tyson Strachan and Andre Benoit. He also made a trade for Josh Gorges. And somehow they equates to being better? No.

Gionta hasn't scored in 19 games this season. Moulson has two goals. Meszaros hasn't played well. Strachan has been mediocre. Gorges has played well in some spurts, poorly in others. Benoit is a team-worst minus-12 in 14 games. Chris Stewart and Torrey Mitchell, acquired in trades last season, have combined for three goals this season.

Murray and the players he acquired have been around long enough to know he can't pin their shortcomings this season solely on the coaching staff. This team is so bad that it's hard to know if Nolan is doing a good job. It's also hard to imagine anyone else doing better. But given their terrible start to the season, Murray has a foundation for Nolan's dismissal.

Nolan's job has been in jeopardy since Pat LaFontaine was abruptly shown the door last season after it appeared the Sabres finally hired the right man to lead hockey operations. Murray gave Nolan a contract extension, but the offer already was on the table before LaFontaine was shipped out. The only question was whether Nolan wanted to stick around with an organization that had kicked LaFontaine to the curb.

Everybody knows Nolan is a "LaFontaine guy." The organization clearly is trying to distance itself from him. Otherwise, they would have included at least one La-La-La-LaFontaine highlight in the montage honoring Rick Jeanneret's greatest calls when he returned to the booth after beating cancer. It wasn't a simple oversight. It was an obvious slight.

Murray shouldn't forget that he's a LaFontaine guy, too. LaFontaine hired him and gave him the general manager title, but really he was set to be a personnel expert in a restructured front office. Remember, when Murray was

hired, LaFontaine said he wasn't finished in the hockey department. The restructure never was completed because LaFontaine was rubbed out in a power struggle involving office politics.

If Murray doesn't think the same can happen to him, given his own shortcomings, he's kidding himself.

Sabres turn back to Neuvirth against Sharks

By Joe Yerdon

NHL.com

November 17, 2014

SHARKS (10-8-2) at SABRES (4-13-2)

TV: NBCSN, CSN-CA

Season series: The [Buffalo Sabres](#) and [San Jose Sharks](#) are meeting for the second and final time this season. The Sabres beat the Sharks 2-1 on Oct. 25 in San Jose. [Cody Hodgson](#) and [Nicolas Deslauriers](#) each had a goal and [Michal Neuvirth](#) made 29 saves. [Brent Burns](#) had San Jose's only goal and [Alex Stalock](#) made 13 saves.

Sharks team scope: The Sharks will wrap up a seven-game road trip against the Sabres and they are coming off a 2-0 win against the [Carolina Hurricanes](#) on Sunday. Rookie goalie [Troy Grosenick](#) stopped 45 shots in his first career start to earn the shutout and [Tomas Hertl](#) and [Joe Thornton](#) each scored. San Jose is 3-3-0 during the road trip and will be looking for its first win against Buffalo since Jan. 23, 2010. The Sharks are 0-6-1 in the past seven games against the Sabres.

Sabres team scope: The Sabres are coming off a 6-2 win at home against the [Toronto Maple Leafs](#) on Saturday. The win provided the Sabres largest offensive output of the season and the first time they've scored that many goals since a 7-4 win against the [Boston Bruins](#) on Jan. 31, 2013. [Zemgus Girgensons](#) scored two goals and [Matt Moulson](#) and [Tyler Ennis](#) each had a goal and two assists. Neuvirth made 32 saves and Sabres coach [Ted Nolan](#) said he will start against the Sharks. The Sabres will use the same lineup from their win against the Maple Leafs on Tuesday.

Hasek loved playing against the game's best

By Corey Masisak

NHL.com

November 17, 2014

TORONTO -- Pat LaFontaine witnessed some of Dominik Hasek's most amazing saves as teammates with the Buffalo Sabres, and he helped welcome "The Dominator" to the Hockey Hall of Fame.

LaFontaine said that Hasek made saves he had never seen before that day and he will never see again. He said "The Dominator" is a perfect nickname for Hasek, because he could truly dominate a game like few individual players could. Everyone on the Sabres roster played with a higher level of confidence when they knew Hasek was behind them.

LaFontaine said the city of Buffalo is a great sports city and the people there adore their heroes. He said Hasek is an iconic figure there and for good reason.

One of Hasek's greatest traits was his work ethic. LaFontaine said Hasek played like he practiced, and the stories were legendary and all true of how he competed to stop the puck even in practice.

LaFontaine talked about Hasek's performance in the 1998 Nagano Games. He said the goalie had started to receive the recognition he deserved before those Olympics started, but after the Czech Republic won the gold, "from that moment on the world knew how great he was."

He closed by saying Hasek deserved to be in the Hockey Hall of Fame because of his relentlessness as a goaltender and his accomplishments as a goaltender, both of which were rivaled by few.

Hasek began his speech by thanking and congratulating the other members of the Class of 2014, noting that referee Bill McCreary was on the ice for the two most important games he ever played for his country, the semifinal and gold-medal games in Nagano, and he was happy to share this honor with him.

The goaltender said his path to this point was marked by kindness and support from countless people. He thanked his parents and his grandparents for their influence and support.

Hasek said his grandfather was a great soccer player, and he would score goals on a young Dominik and then needle him about it. He also said that helped make him want to be a goalie.

At the age of six, Hasek's father cobbled together some goalie equipment for his son. Some of it was handmade, but Hasek said he took to the position immediately, and never wanted to play anywhere else again.

He said he couldn't thank his mother and grandmother enough for the sacrifices they made, particularly waking up early so he could practice being a goaltender.

Hasek said at the age of 25, he decided to try his luck in the NHL. It didn't go well at first, and Hasek said it was a decision he questioned at first after he was sent to the minors and also unprotected in an expansion draft.

Eventually, Hasek said he embraced those early tribulations and it made him a better player. Hasek said he learned how to adjust to smaller ice surfaces and learned the culture while playing in the International Hockey League.

He said he enjoyed his time with the Chicago Blackhawks, but with Eddie Belfour playing in front of me there was not enough time for both. Hasek said he was "shuffled off" to Buffalo and it turned out to be one of the best moves of his life.

Hasek said some of the best years of his life were in Buffalo because of the support from the owners, coaches and the players in the organization. He thanked people behind the scenes who "focused on the little things so we could focus on the big things."

The fans in Buffalo supported Hasek, so much that when he returned from Nagano, he felt like he was bringing the gold medal back to his home country.

When Hasek went to play for the Detroit Red Wings, he said it was something special to play with the greatest team and greatest collection of players he had ever played with.

He thanked the owners of HC Pardubice, his hometown team in the Czech Republic who helped him win one more championship after his NHL career ended.

Hasek closed by saying he enjoyed getting to play with and against the greatest players in the world, and that they were some of the greatest people he had ever met.

Sabres lose NHL shot-block leader Gorges (knee) for 'weeks'

By Mike Halford

NBC Sports

November 17, 2014

Looks as though Buffalo will be without the services of Josh Gorges for quite a while.

Gorges, who suffered a knee injury against St. Louis last Tuesday, is going to be sidelined for "weeks" according to GM Tim Murray.

"It's not the worst, but it's not the best," Murray said, per the Buffalo News. "It's in between. He's not coming back any time soon. It's weeks. I have not been told about surgery, so until [athletic trainer] Tim Macre tells me something I can't speculate."

Gorges, 30, had been a key figure on the Sabres' blueline to start the year, averaging 21:36 over the first 17 games while leading the league in shot blocks, with 60.

Without Gorges in the lineup, the Sabres have given an increased workload to '13 first-rounder Nikita Zadorov, including a career-high 25:17 in Thursday's 6-3 loss to Minnesota (in which Zadorov finished with an assist and a plus-3 rating). As Brough wrote earlier this morning, it sounds as though the Sabres are going to keep the Russian rearguard for the season, rather than return him junior.

The Legend of Dominik Hasek: From hockey heretic to the Hall of Fame

By Nicholas Cotsonika

Yahoo Sports

November 17, 2014

TORONTO — One day in January 2002, Dominik Hasek was in goal while the Detroit Red Wings practiced at the other end of the ice. He spent the dead time doing his visualization drills, flopping all over the crease, foiling imaginary foes, until Brendan Shanahan had a free moment and grabbed a puck.

Four years before, Hasek had stoned Shanahan in a shootout at the Nagano Olympics, giving the Czech Republic a stunning 2-1 semifinal win over Canada. Now here they were again. They were in an empty arena with nothing at stake, but they were two all-time greats going head to head a month before the Salt Lake Olympics.

Shanahan broke away ...

Save.

Shanahan tried again ...

Save.

Shanahan tried once more ...

Save.

Finally, Shanahan had enough, and Hasek went back to battling his ghosts.

"I enjoy to be competitive, not only in the game but also in the practice," Hasek said the other day. "I really enjoy it."

This is the legend of the Dominator.

Be it the biggest stage or backstage, Dominik Hasek was determined to stop the puck. He saw, practiced and played the game differently than any other goaltender, and he will enter the Hockey Hall of Fame on Monday night as the greatest of his era, if not all-time.

Patrick Roy and Martin Brodeur both won more games and more Stanley Cups. Roy also won three Conn Smythe Trophies as the playoffs' most valuable player. But the best single-season save percentage Roy ever posted was .925, and Brodeur's best was .927. Hasek was .930 or better *five* times. He was .922 for his *career*.

At his peak Hasek was far ahead of his peers. He led the NHL in save percentage six straight seasons, ranging from .920 to .937 from 1993-94 through 1998-99, when the average ranged from .895 to .908. No one else has led the league more than four times total.

Hasek won six Vezina Trophies as the NHL's best goaltender, the most since 1981-82, when the NHL stopped giving the Vezina to the goaltender whose team allowed the fewest regular-season goals and put it to a vote of the general managers.

He won back-to-back Hart Trophies as the NHL MVP in 1997 and '98. He was the first goaltender to win the Hart since Jacques Plante in 1962, and he remains only the sixth to win it since 1924 and the only one to win it twice.

He won Olympic gold, a Stanley Cup as a starter and another Cup as a backup late in his career.

"He had the instincts of a Wayne Gretzky as a goalie," said Chris Osgood, a former goaltender and Detroit teammate. "Really, he was one of the few goalies who ever played the game who could intimidate the other team before the puck dropped. They didn't know how to score on him because you never knew what he was going to do."

* * * * *

Hasek was a goaltender and competitor as early as he could remember. As a child playing in Pardubice, in what was then Czechoslovakia, he never wanted to score. He wanted to stop the ball, or the puck, or whatever there was to stop.

"I just loved it," Hasek said.

Hasek's grandfather, a former soccer player, would shoot balls at him for hours while his father was at work. A tree would be one goal post, a trash can the other. If his grandfather scored, his grandfather would tease him. If his grandfather got tired, his grandfather would get a tantrum. "I said, 'No, we don't go home. Here's the ball and try to score,' " Hasek said.

Hasek won six Vezina Trophies as the NHL's best goalie with the Sabres. (Getty)

If Hasek lost a game, if he lost in practice, if the team he cheered was just *losing*, he would cry. "I remember my grandpa, he had a handkerchief in his hands, and he always told me, 'You don't have to cry when you lose,' " he said.

From age 6 to age 25, from youth hockey to high-level hockey at home, Hasek never had a goalie coach. He had to learn on his own. He came up with an unorthodox style that played to his strengths. He was tall and skinny, bendy and quick, smart and creative. He was a Gumby on skates, a mad genius.

"I was more flexible than the other goalies," Hasek said. "My butterfly, I think, was the best at my time. I could reach from post to post with my butterfly. My legs were ... The whole body was more flexible so I could be more on my knees because I could reach farther than the other goalies."

Hasek would do more than kick his legs. He would roll on his back and lay his arm across the goal line. He would charge out of his net to break up a breakaway. He would drop his stick and pick up the puck with his blocker hand. "I was doing it in Czech, and I just kept doing it," Hasek said.

When Hasek came to North America in 1990-91, he hoped to be a starter in the NHL. But the Chicago Blackhawks had Eddie Belfour, a future Hall of Famer who would win the Vezina that season. Goalie coach Vladislav Tretiak, the Soviet legend, one of Hasek's heroes, didn't pay much attention to him. "He was more like just only Eddie Belfour goalie coach because they were so close," Hasek said. "He wasn't working with me on an everyday basis."

Hasek split time between the Blackhawks and the IHL's Indianapolis Ice for two years. But there was one positive: "Fortunately," Hasek said, "I didn't understand English at that time, so I had no idea what was written about me in the papers, what the coaches say, so I couldn't listen too much to them."

They said he looked like a fish out of water, basically. But then the Blackhawks traded Hasek to the Buffalo Sabres, and he met goalie coach Mitch Korn. "He knew that my style is not bad," Hasek said. "He said you just need to work on some other things to get you better. I was lucky to get this goalie coach who never really tried to change my style."

Hasek put up an .896 save percentage in 28 games for the Sabres in 1992-93 as Belfour won his second and final Vezina. At age 28, there was no indication he was going to last in the NHL, let alone make the Hall of Fame – 53 career games, .896 career save percentage.

The next season, Hasek won his first Vezina.

"I didn't quite understand how he played the game," said John Davidson, a former NHL goaltender, who was then a TV broadcaster and is now the chairman of the Hockey Hall of Fame selection committee. "And then when I watched more and more ... there was definitely a method to all of his madness. ...

"That style, people look at it and go, 'That's just kind of like water running all over the place.' It was not. Everything he did was by design."

* * * * *

Hasek had the best years of his career in Buffalo. He still considers it his second home. But after the Sabres lost in the Cup final in 1999, he felt the team deteriorated and didn't have a chance to win. He asked for a trade in 2001 and chose to go to Detroit.

He called it "one of my best decisions." He played for Hall of Fame coach Scotty Bowman on a team full of future Hall of Famers. Seven players on that roster are in the Hall already, and Pavel Datsyuk, Sergei Fedorov and Nicklas Lidstrom should join them eventually. They won the Cup in 2002, and Hasek retired.

For a while. He still loved stopping the puck. He came back with the Wings in 2003-04, then retired again because of injury – and asked the Wings not to pay him. He came back with the Ottawa Senators in 2005-06 and played in the Torino Olympics, then spent two more years in Detroit.

Osgood, who had to leave Detroit because of Hasek in 2001, took the 43-year-old's job in the first round of the 2008 playoffs and went on to win another Cup. But that doesn't diminish the legend of the Dominator. It enhances it.

Listen to this: In hindsight, Osgood wishes he never would have left Detroit in the first place. "I could have taken my game to the next level if I would have stayed and played with him," Osgood said.

Hasek and Osgood got along well, and Osgood got an up-close look at what made Hasek so great.

"There was a misconception that he was a guesser," Osgood said. "No, he was not. He knew exactly what he was doing at all times, and it would work – for him. ... I'd just fool around in practice and try to do what he did, and I'd just look awful flopping around. It might have looked like it was out of control, but there was always a purpose for everything he did.

"He saw the game. That's one thing I noticed more with him than anybody else that I played with. He saw the game better than any other goalie I've seen, reading plays and slowing the game down."

Even if Osgood could not imitate Hasek, Hasek taught Osgood so many things – how to approach the game mentally, how to work. Hasek would never stress off the ice, resting his mind, saving himself. When he took the ice for practice or the game, he had singular focus.

One day, the Wings lost a shootout. The next practice, Hasek put all the pucks at center ice and had teammates take penalty shots. If Hasek and Osgood stopped a puck, it went in the corner. If they didn't, the puck went back to center ice. The goalies could not leave until they had stopped every puck. "If he deemed in his mind he wasn't good at something," Osgood said, "he made darn sure he was going to get good at it."

The morning of Game 6 of the 2008 Cup final, Osgood left the ice as Hasek lined up pucks at the hash marks. He had teammates skate in from the blue line as fast as they could and then shoot as hard as they could, so he could work on his reflexes. He was backing up. This turned out to be his last day in the NHL. "That's just the way he was," Osgood said. "He never gave up, never quit. He worked hard every day until he was done."

Hasek still wasn't done playing, though. He spent another season playing in his hometown of Pardubice in the Czech league. He spent another season playing for Spartak Moscow in the KHL. He'd still play now, if he could. He'll have to be content in the Hall of Fame.

"Sometimes it was difficult to listen to people, like, my style is not good," Hasek said. "But I'm glad I could prove that my style is good enough."

Sabres finally have goal scoring and top line

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

November 17, 2014

BUFFALO – Finally, more than a month into the season, the Sabres' feeble offense has busted loose, scoring nine goals in the last two outings, including a season-high six in Saturday's annihilation of Toronto.

About time, right?

The NHL's weakest attack scored 19 goals in the first 17 games, so the last two contests have accounted for 32 percent of the Sabres' offense this season.

Incredible.

The Sabres are scoring at a shocking 120-goal pace. That would be 30 *fewer* goals than last season, when they set the all-time low mark.

Still, the Sabres have been showcasing some steady progress entering tonight's tilt against the San Jose Sharks inside the First Niagara Center. The offense hasn't been a fluke.

Perhaps most importantly, the Sabres might have a top combination they can lean on. The trio of center Zemgus Girgensons and wingers Tyler Ennis and Matt Moulson looks like a legitimate No. 1 line.

"Those players lead the way for you," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said Monday. "It took us a little while to find ours, but it looks like we got one going pretty good right now."

The linemates have a combined six goals and 14 points since Nolan put them together three games ago (some points were accumulated on special teams).

"We have to score," said Ennis, who has two goals and five points during a three-game point streak. "We've struggled to score this year as a team. Now they're starting to come. It's a lot more fun. We got to do that every single night."

Nolan created that trio by moving some pieces around. Ennis, who played left wing earlier in his career, was the Sabres' top center for almost a year. On a team with a dearth of talent down the middle, shifting your best asset to right wing was a bit risky.

So far, the move has paid off.

"I'm glad I'm back on the wing," Ennis said. "I feel comfortable there. We're making plays and having fun again."

Nolan said the Sabres had to fix the offense themselves.

"We haven't got the luxury of having players come from anywhere to help us," Nolan said. "We got to help ourselves. That's what we talked to the team about."

He added: "I don't think it was desperate."

Why are the linemates meshing so well?

"They're working, and when things ain't working, you're not working," Nolan said. "Girgensons is a perfect example."

The tenacious Girgensons, a 20-year-old just 89 games into his career, has morphed into arguably the Sabres' most reliable player.

The Latvian has been on a tear, compiling four goals and six points in the last five games. He scored twice Saturday.

"Just playing with those two guys is unbelievable, two great players that just create opportunities sometimes from nothing," Girgensons said.

Some believe Girgensons, the No. 14 pick in 2012, could be taking the first steps into stardom.

"I think it's just proof that hard work brings out success in people, and Z's the hardest worker every night – he hits, he competes, he blocks the puck," Ennis said. "He's driven to be a great player. He's really taken that next step, and he's fun to be playing on a line with right now."

Moulson added: "From where he was even last year ... he seems to keep improving. He works extremely hard. It's not a coincidence that he keeps getting better. He puts in a lot of time."

Nolan thinks Girgensons has possessed same style for a long time.

"He's only 20 years old, that's the beauty about the whole thing, and his maturity, that of a 24-, 25-year-old," he said. "I don't think he's changed anything; it's just right now the puck has been going in for him."

After signing a five-year, \$25 million deal July 1, nothing was going in early for Moulson, a three-time 30-goal scorer.

"I think at the start of the season you come in and put a lot of pressure on yourself," Moulson said. "Personally, I know I did that. When things don't go right, it kind of builds up mentally. I don't think I was really playing my game, not playing well. I think the last couple games I've found that confidence, got that confidence back."

Sabres notes: Nikita Zadorov will stay in Buffalo

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
November 17, 2014

BUFFALO – Sabres defenseman Nikita Zadorov is staying put. Coach Ted Nolan said Monday the 19-year-old Russian has earned a roster spot.

After playing seven straight games, including a 25-minute outing Thursday, it was assumed the Sabres would keep him.

"I try not to assume, but I'm more than positive he's earned his keep," Nolan said inside the First Niagara Center.

Tonight's tilt against the San Jose Sharks will be Zadorov's ninth game. His contract activates with a 10th appearance.

Zadorov, the No. 16 pick in 2013, has endured a long road to regular duty. He was scratched the first seven games and 11 of the first 12.

The Sabres were essentially stashing him because he needed a release from his Russian club to return to junior. But with nothing to lose, Nolan inserted him Nov. 2.

He hasn't left the lineup since.

"He was benched and scratched at the rookie camp at Traverse City," Nolan said. "So no one gave him the benefit of the doubt of making this team. We worked at it. We worked with him. Things are really working out."

Zadorov and 20-year-old Rasmus Ristolainen, a youngster the Sabres drafted eight spots earlier two years ago, have formed a steady duo. In Thursday's 6-3 loss in Minnesota, they combined for a plus-5 rating.

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The Sabres have beaten the Sharks, one of the NHL's top teams for years, seven straight times. They won 2-1 on Oct. 25 in San Jose.

"I didn't know about that record until somebody pointed it out our last game down in San Jose," Nolan said. "For whatever reason, we just got the lucky breaks those nights."

The Sharks have won one game in Buffalo since they joined the NHL in 1991, a 5-0 win Dec. 2, 2005, superstar Joe Thornton's first game with San Jose.

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Nolan said the Sabres will use the same lineup tonight that beat Toronto 6-2 on Saturday. Goalie Michal Neuvirth will start.

Hasek shows Buffalo plenty of love in Hall of Fame speech

By Steve Vesey

WIVB

November 17, 2014

TORONTO (WIVB) - Dominik Hasek took his rightful spot in the Hockey Hall of Fame Monday night, thanking many who helped him along the way – including his memorable stop in Buffalo.

The NHL's only goalie to earn a pair of MVP awards became a star with the Sabres, picking up six Vezina Trophies along the way as the game's top netminder.

"Eddie Belfour played so well in front of me that it was impossible for me to play much in Chicago," said Hasek. "Then I got lucky. I was shuffled off to Buffalo."

Buffalo clearly left an impression on Hasek, who thanked several members of the organization and praised the fans during his speech tonight.

"The fans and the people in Buffalo supported me through every success I had. The welcome Richard Smehlik and I received after we returned from Nagano with an Olympic gold medal made me feel like we were bringing the gold back home, not into foreign country," said Hasek.

Hasek went on to win a pair of Stanley Cups in Detroit. Tonight, he reached a different pinnacle in his career.

"This league is home to the greatest players in the world and to some of the most wonderful people I have ever met. This experience has changed my life in ways that I never imagined was possible," said Hasek. "You all helped turn my dream into a reality."

The Dominator is the ninth former Sabres player inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame.

Strachan has productive night on top pair

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

November 17, 2014

Changes to the top forward lines and the defensive pairings have worked out for the Buffalo Sabres lately.

With alternate captain Josh Gorges out with a lower-body injury, Tyler Myers needed a new defensive partner. In Buffalo's 6-2 win over Toronto on Saturday, Tyson Strachan, a right-hand shot, shifted over to the left side to play next to the 6-foot-8 Myers.

Strachan played a season-high 22:54 and picked up a secondary assist on Zemgus Girgensons' shorthanded goal in Buffalo's 6-2 win over Toronto.

He now has four assists in nine games this season, which not only matches his career high for points, but also leads the defense in scoring.

What can he attribute that success to?

"Good forwards, I guess?" he said, laughing after practice at First Niagara Center on Monday. "I think three of my four assists, I've probably had from my own zone so it's not like I'm making backdoor passes. I'm getting pucks out. The point the other night, it's a shorthanded goal.

"All I'm doing is trying to ice the puck and Flynn goes down and makes an unbelievable play. Gussy takes it and makes another great play and puts it in an open net. I'll take those assists all day, but it's nothing special. I'm not working the power play or anything."

He's spent a bulk of his career bouncing between the NHL and the minors, filling in whenever teams have needed him to step into the lineup. So far, the calm, steady defensive defenseman has taken advantage of the situation presented before him in Buffalo. After sitting out nine of the first 10 games, he may have finally found his footing.

"I've had to be patient my whole career. I've always played myself into jobs not played out of them," he said. "So I've just been waiting for the opportunity and I'm going to keep battling every day like that. If there's an assist coming, bouncing off people's backs or whatever they are, I'll take them."

The duo of Mike Weber and Andrej Meszaros was a combined plus-5 on Saturday. Each picked up an assist as well.

And Sabres coach Ted Nolan has continued to be impressed by the pairing of Buffalo's 2013 first-round selections Rasmus Ristolainen and Nikita Zadorov.

Zadorov is eligible to play in one more game before the team must decide whether to keep him in Buffalo and activate his entry-level contract or return him to his junior club, the London Knights of the Ontario Hockey League.

"I try not to assume, but I'm more than positive he's earned his keep," Nolan said of Zadorov.

He'll be in the lineup against the San Jose Sharks on Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. as Nolan said he'll keep the lineup intact. That means goaltender Michal Neuvirth will start between the pipes once again. He was in net when the Sabres beat the Sharks 2-1 in San Jose on Oct. 25.

TOP DOGS

A week ago at practice, Nolan tried a few new forward combinations, including moving Tyler Ennis to right wing on a line with Girgensons at center and Matt Moulson on the other side.

Playing together 5-on-5 the past three games has sparked a little offense in each of them in all situations. Moulson has a goal and four assists, Girgensons has three goals and an assist and Ennis has two goals and three assists over that span.

Moulson thinks a bulk of those scoring opportunities have come because of stronger – and shorter – play in the defensive zone.

“Much like the team-wise, it starts in the D-zone. Zemgus has been down low for the most part and he’s a great defensive player,” he said. “We seem to be getting out and getting on pucks in our zone and creating chances and putting away our chances. We still have a lot of room to improve, but we’re on the right path.”

MONDAY’S PRACTICE

26 Matt Moulson – 28 Zemgus Girgensons – 63 Tyler Ennis
65 Brian Flynn – 17 Torrey Mitchell – 12 Brian Gionta
44 Nicolas Deslauriers – 8 Cody McCormick – 21 Drew Stafford
82 Marcus Foligno – 19 Cody Hodgson – 80 Chris Stewart – 36 Patrick Kaleta

24 Tyson Strachan – 57 Tyler Myers
51 Nikita Zadorov – 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
6 Mike Weber – 41 Andrej Meszaros
61 Andre Benoit

34 Michal Neuvirth
1 Jhonas Enroth

Did not skate: 4 Josh Gorges (injured, lower-body), 31 Matt Hackett (He was being fitted for a new goalie mask)

Sabres prospects report

By Kris Baker

Sabres.com

November 17, 2014

Kitchener forward Justin Bailey (2013, second round) continued his hot start to the year, notching seven points (4+3) in three games last week as the Rangers extended their streak to 15 games without a regulation loss. For his efforts, Bailey was named the OHL's Player of the Week.

The Williamsville-native kicked off the week with his second hat trick of the season plus an assist as Kitchener bested Plymouth 5-3 on Friday. Bailey remained in his groove on Saturday with a goal and an assist in the Rangers' 5-2 victory at Erie. He followed that up on Sunday with a helper and a shootout tally in a 3-2 loss to Sudbury.

Bailey's early season success has seen him collect team bests of 14 goals and 29 points in 19 games. He has seven multi-point efforts while getting on the score sheet in 17 of the 19 contests.

OHL

A night after being held pointless in a 7-2 drubbing at North Bay, Eric Cornel (2014, second round) cruised to a one goal and three assist performance Saturday as Peterborough defeated Niagara 5-1. The four-point night, Cornel's first of the season and fourth of his OHL career, gives the crafty forward 18 points (6+12) in 18 games.

Brendan Lemieux (2014, second round) planted in front and deflected a point shot for his 10th goal of the year Saturday as Barrie edged North Bay 3-2. The power-play marker gives the fiery winger 17 points (10+7) in 16 games, and six of his 10 goals have come with the man advantage. Lemieux began the week on Thursday playing a fourth-line role in Team OHL's 4-0 loss to Russia in game 3 of the Subway Super Series.

Nick Baptiste (2013, third round) scored two goals last week as Sudbury won once in three tries. Baptiste bagged his fifth goal of the year Friday as Sudbury was dealt a 5-2 loss at Mississauga. The speedy forward went without a point in a 5-2 loss at Sarnia on Saturday, but countered with another marker in Sunday's 3-2 shootout triumph at Kitchener. Baptiste, who completed a stretch of four games in as many days following Thursday's appearance with Team OHL at the Subway Super Series, has 10 points (6+4) at the 10-game mark.

WHL

Sam Reinhart (2014, first round) kept his high-level production in tact over the weekend with seven points in two games as Kootenay moved to 4-0 since getting their captain back from Buffalo.

Reinhart tied his career-high with four assists Friday as the ICE earned a wild 7-6 overtime victory over Calgary. He kept it going on Saturday with a goal and two helpers in a 4-2 triumph at Lethbridge. Reinhart has been a step ahead of the opposition while collecting 10 points (3+7) in his first four games.

Before resuming his role in Kootenay, Reinhart began the week wearing the "C" for Team WHL in a pair of games against Russia in the 2014 Subway Super Series. In Monday's opener, Reinhart clanged his shootout attempt off the post as Team WHL dropped a 2-1 decision. The calm pivot recorded one assist the following night as Team WHL was again defeated by the Russians 3-2.

Brycen Martin (2014, third round) registered one assist Friday as Swift Current lost to Prince Albert 4-3 in a shootout. The lefthanded defender was unable to produce in Sunday's 2-1 victory over Seattle. Martin has eight points (0+8) and a plus-two rating through 23 games.

OMJHL

In Friday action, Vaclav Karabacek (2014, second round) scored his sixth goal of the year as Gatineau dropped a

7-4 decision at Rimouski. Karabacek produced one shot on goal Sunday as Gatineau edged Sherbrooke 1-0. The Czech winger has produced 15 points (6+9) in 21 games, but has yet to score in back-to-back contests.

NCAA

Connor Hurley (2013, second round) snapped a four-game point drought Friday when he jammed home the game-winning goal in overtime as Notre Dame squeaked past Merrimack 3-2. The freshman pivot was kept off the scoresheet in Saturday's 4-1 loss to the Warriors, leaving him with six points (2+4) through his first 10 collegiate contests.

After serving as the backup in Friday's victory, Notre Dame goaltender Cal Petersen (2013, fifth round) made 20 saves on Saturday as the Fighting Irish were defeated 4-1 at Merrimack. Petersen moves to 3-4-1 with a 2.70 GAA and .916 save%. Next up for Notre Dame is a rare Thursday night tilt versus UMass Lowell.

JT Compher (2013, second round) posted a pair of assists Friday as Michigan downed American International 5-2. Compher notched another helper Saturday as the Wolverines doubled up the Yellow Jackets 6-3. Compher has collected six assists in his first nine games for unranked Michigan, but continues the search for his first goal of the season. The Wolverines remain on home ice next weekend to kick off the B1G schedule versus Penn State.

Sophomore winger Hudson Fasching walked away without a point for the first time this season as No. 1 Minnesota suffered their first sweep of the year with 3-0 and 2-1 losses to No. 15 Minnesota-Duluth. Fasching's five goals are second-most on the Gophers through his first 10 outings.

Minnesota senior Christian Isackson (2010, seventh round) contributed two shots on goal in the losses to the Minnesota-Duluth. The Gophers will host Team USA U18 for a recruiting exhibition on Friday.

Anthony Florentino (2013, fifth round) produced three shots on goal Friday as Providence upset No. 10 Vermont 3-0. The sophomore defender made a handful of key defensive plays the next night as Friars were edged 2-1 by the Catamounts. After picking up four points (0+4) in the Friars' first six games, Florentino has been blanked in his last four.

Providence senior defenseman Mark Adams (2009, fifth round) finished the series versus Vermont with a plus-one rating and four minor penalties. The Friars visit New Hampshire on Friday.

Judd Peterson (2012, seventh round) produced two shots on goal over the weekend as No. 14 St. Cloud State earned a 4-3 victory and 1-1 tie at Western Michigan. Peterson has two assists in 10 games this season. The Huskies welcome North Dakota to town next weekend.

Max Willman (2014, fifth round) picked up an assist Friday as Brown was hammered by Harvard 6-2. Willman put three shots on goal as Brown was rolled by Dartmouth 6-0. In six games this season, Willman has two goals and one assist. The Bears are at Colgate on Friday.

Sean Malone (2013, sixth round) remained out of the lineup with an undisclosed injury as Harvard bounced Brown before being defeated by Yale 2-1. The Crimson face Dartmouth on Tuesday.

USHL

Christopher Brown (2014, sixth round) picked up an assist Friday in Green Bay's 4-1 loss to Madison. On Saturday, the Boston College commit was unable to crack the scoresheet in the Gamblers' 3-2 shootout victory at Des Moines. Brown has a team-best five goals and 10 points through 14 games. Green Bay is at Madison on Friday.

Sweden

Gustav Possler (2013, fifth round) scored his fourth goal of the year Saturday as MODO was defeated 5-4 by Leksands IF. Possler, who missed MODO's previous two games with an upper body injury, scooped up a rebound early in the third period to cut the deficit to 4-3. The marker gives him nine points in 18 appearances this season.

Linus Ullmark (2012, sixth round) made 16 saves Thursday as MODO returned from the international break with a 2-1 loss to Djurgardens IF. Ullmark again received the starting nod on Saturday, stopping 33 of 38 shots in the 5-4 loss to Leksands IF. The 6-foot-3 netminder is 5-7 this season with a 3.83 GAA and .880 save%.

MODO winger Victor Olofsson (2014, seventh round) saw his three-game point streak snapped in Thursday's loss to Djurgardens IF despite receiving a season-high 15:03 of work. The 19-year old rookie, who was again blanked on Saturday, has six goals and 12 points at the 20-game mark.

In J20 SuperElit action, goaltender Jonas Johansson (2014, third round) made 25 saves Sunday as Brynas IF edged Skelleftea AIK 2-1. The victory moves Johansson's J20 record to 2-2 with a 3.02 GAA and .902 save%.