



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Flames-Sabres preview

By Kevin Chroust

Associated Press

December 10, 2014

The Calgary Flames have lost consecutive games in regulation for the first time this season, and their next destination might at first glance seem likely to help end such a skid.

The Buffalo Sabres, though, have been a stingy home team lately and will try to win for a sixth time in seven games at First Niagara Center Thursday night against the Flames.

Calgary (17-10-2) is making a second stop on a four-game trip, which started with Tuesday's 4-1 loss in Toronto. That followed Saturday's 3-2 home loss to San Jose, but the players aren't yet reading into the brief slide as anything to cause major concern.

"I think the last two games for the most part we've been pretty good, just a couple stretches where turnovers led to goals," forward Paul Byron told the team's official website. "If we can take those out the team's been playing good otherwise."

The Flames have been limited to three goals in those two games, but it hasn't stopped defenseman Mark Giordano from continuing his stellar season. The 31-year-old has a five-game point streak, ranks first among NHL defensemen with 29 points, and coach Bob Hartley says his leading presence has had plenty of impact on the Flames' turnaround.

"For me, I have made lots of good moves and bad moves in my coaching career, but I would rank putting Mark Giordano captain of this hockey club probably as the best move of my career," Hartley said.

Buffalo (10-16-2) is still seeking such leadership but has taken a strong step forward in recent weeks. It defeated Los Angeles 1-0 on Tuesday for a fifth home win in six tries while limiting opponents to seven goals. The success comes on the heels of a 1-6-2 home start, and it has three more games on the homestand to further correct things. Overall, the Sabres have won seven of 10.

Against the Kings, Tyler Ennis sparked a dormant power play, and Jhonas Enroth made 34 saves in his first shutout of the season.

Ennis' third-period winner was part of a 1-for-4 night on the power play, which the Sabres had preceded with a 5-for-76 (6.6 percent) season mark. They've still got plenty of work to improve on their league-worst mark, and it might be difficult to do against Calgary. The Flames have stayed out of the penalty box lately and killed 9 of 10 over the last seven games.

Enroth will make his ninth start in 10 games against the Flames, and he's 6-2-0 with a 1.79 goals-against average in his last eight overall appearances. His .947 save percentage is the best in hockey among goaltenders with more than three games dating to Nov. 18.

"He's playing great," Ennis said of Enroth. "He's one of the biggest factors why we've been winning this last month. When we break down he's there to make a good save."

He's 1-0-1 with a 1.49 GAA against Calgary, though his counterpart has also been strong lately.

Karri Ramo will start for the Flames and brings with him a 1.99 GAA over a 6-1-0 stretch after suffering the loss to the Sharks.

His two career starts against the Sabres have both come in Buffalo and yielded a 1-1-0 record and 3.54 GAA.

Calgary has one win in its last 10 visits to Buffalo, but it came last season as the Flames swept the two-game season set. Byron scored in both but has matched a career-worst span of eight games without a point.

Sabres' Stewart defends himself

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

December 10, 2014

Chris Stewart is angry. That makes Ted Nolan happy.

The player-coach dynamic is often a fragile one, especially when said player has run afoul of his coach. The anger in Stewart's eyes and the stern, measured tones in his voice said plenty after practice Wednesday in First Niagara Center.

The Buffalo Sabres winger was a healthy scratch for the first time since joining the club in March in Tuesday's 1-0 win over the Los Angeles Kings. It stands to reason he might not play again here tonight when the Calgary Flames are the opponent.

Stewart ducked the media after Tuesday's morning skate. He met reporters head-on Wednesday.

"I'm not happy about it. I don't agree with being a healthy scratch, but I'm going to take it on the chin like a man," he said. "I'm happy the boys got the win, it was a big two points. Put the work boots on and get ready for the next time I'm back in the lineup."

Stewart has three goals, four points and a minus-11 rating this season. Remember, this is from a player with 118 career goals and a pair of 28-goal seasons in the NHL. For underachievers on the Sabres' roster this season, Stewart and Cody Hodgson have no equals.

Last week in Florida, Nolan accused Stewart and fellow winger Marcus Foligno of doing "pirouettes" in the neutral zone. Stewart's ice time slipped to a season-low 7:48 during Saturday's loss to the Florida Panthers and is now down to nothing.

What did Nolan tell him? As of Wednesday afternoon, Stewart said he had not spoken to the coach.

"He should be angry. Anybody who gets scratched should be disappointed and want to get back in there," Nolan said. "He's no different. He'll get back in eventually. Sometimes no words are louder than words sometimes. People get the message. The only thing we're trying to do with 'Stewie' is get him to play hard like everybody else."

"If coach wants to talk to you, he brings you in, right?" said Stewart. "I don't think there's much to talk about. I've got to elevate my play. I'm not happy with my play either."

Stewart seemed particularly agitated when asked his reaction to Nolan calling his play "soft" on Tuesday. That's a word players loathe and Stewart was quick to point out he's fought noted tough guys Brandon Prust of Montreal and Milan Lucic of Boston this season.

Scowled Stewart: "I don't think I'm a soft player. You can ask Prust, you can ask Lucic how soft I am. I'm sure they'll have a better answer for you."

Understanding that's a dangerous line for a coach to cross, Nolan seemed to backtrack on the comment a little Wednesday.

"He's a powerful forward. He's a good player," Nolan said. "When I said 'soft' the other day, sometimes people take that" GEICO "commercial on TV and take it literally – a million bucks' and a whole bunch of deer show up. I didn't mean he was soft. I meant we need him to play harder as a power forward."

Stewart has a pair of highlight-reel breakaway goals this season, against Winnipeg and in Montreal's Bell Centre, that show what he can do with the powerful strides of his 6-foot-2, 231-pound frame.

Some nights, he can be a beast. Others, he's invisible. Stewart has 57 shots on goal for the season – but 36 of them have come in just eight games.

"If I had an answer, I probably would have made changes a long time ago," he said. "I feel like I'm working. Some funny things happen in this game. I'm capable of getting hot and rattling off some goals here, and I just have to wait for that opportunity.

"Most of my career I've been an offensive guy, but when things aren't going your way, I guess you've got to contribute physically. I guess I have to start looking for some big hits and chasing some hits and bringing that physical play."

The back story to all this is that Stewart has an expiring \$4.2 million contract, is already one of the hotter trade subjects in the league – and could be a sought-after free agent this summer if he was playing well.

"Obviously this isn't an ideal situation to be in for my contract year right now, but I've got to stay positive," Stewart said. "You can't read into all the speculation. I said since I got here as long as I'm a Buffalo Sabre, I'm just going to worry about being here."

Nolan didn't officially rule Stewart out of tonight's game. With Tyler Ennis taking a maintenance day, Stewart skated with Zemgus Girgensons and Matt Moulson in practice Wednesday. Maybe it's just a one-game lesson. But on the other hand, wouldn't it be tough to change a lineup that just beat the Stanley Cup champions?

"Not necessarily," Nolan insisted, perhaps simply to not tip his hand.

But Nolan then added: "The toughest part is we had 20 guys who played their hearts out and played hard and we're talking about a healthy scratch."

Sabres notebook: In goalie battle, Enroth appears to be No. 1

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

December 10, 2014

Jhonas Enroth will get the call in goal for the Buffalo Sabres Thursday against Calgary in First Niagara Center, and it will be his seventh start in the team's last eight games.

Coach Ted Nolan doesn't want to go so far as to say Enroth is his No. 1 goalie, but those numbers pretty much tell the tale.

"Calling a No. 1 like a line is just status," Nolan insisted Wednesday. "Jhonas is playing well. The one who is playing the best is the No. 1, so right now he's playing well."

Sure is. In his last eight games, Enroth is 6-2 with a 1.79 goals-against average and .946 save percentage, numbers that were boosted by his 34-save shutout in Tuesday's 1-0 win over Los Angeles. The Sabres' goaltending tandem of Enroth and Michal Neuvirth entered Wednesday's play eighth in the league in save percentage at .917, a startling ranking for a team trying to stay out of the bottom of the standings.

Among goalies who have played at least 10 games, Neuvirth is in a three-way tie for ninth in the league in overall save percentage at .920. At even strength, Enroth is in seventh place at .935.

Enroth was at .918 at even-strength last year, .931 during the lockout year and .927 during the 2011-12 season, so he's traditionally been good in that area. But his numbers are even stronger than normal and he bounced back very well Tuesday from last week's 5-0 loss at Tampa Bay.

"I've been feeling very sharp," Enroth said. "Even the game in Tampa, I thought I was doing well. I know we gave up five goals, but that was just bad bounces, all five goals. The last two or three weeks I've been pretty sharp."

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Tyler Ennis sat out practice Wednesday for what Nolan called a maintenance day and should be fine for tonight's game. Nolan said defenseman Andrej Meszaros has been cleared from his concussion protocol and also could be available.

The news is not as good on defenseman Tyson Strachan's lower-body injury, as Nolan said he's not close to returning. Strachan has missed two games and is not skating, so he's likely to miss a few more as the Sabres play five times in the next 11 days.

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Tuesday was the fourth time this season in 28 games the Sabres have been involved in a scoreless tie through 40 minutes. In an interesting turnabout from where they are in the standings, Buffalo is 3-0-1 in those games, and the figure is not lost on Nolan after beating the defending Stanley Cup champion Kings.

"You set a certain culture and attitude and that culture and attitude take over," he said. "It doesn't necessarily mean you have to have the best skill in the world to win. It means you have to have the biggest will to win and we proved it."

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The Flames hit town Thursday on a two-game losing streak, but still rating as one of the surprise teams in the West. This is the second game of a four-game road trip that opened with Tuesday's 4-1 loss in Toronto and continues with games in Pittsburgh and Chicago. Prior to the two-game skid, the Flames had won four in a row and five out of six.

Calgary is getting Norris Trophy-level play from Mark Giordano, who leads all NHL defensemen in points with a team-high 29. Giordano's 22 assists are tied for third in the league behind Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby and Philadelphia's Jakub Voracek. Calgary winger Johnny Gaudreau, last year's Hobey Baker Award winner at Boston College, is second in rookie scoring with 21 points and first in assists (16).

The Flames have split goaltending between veteran Jonas Hiller (9-7-1, 2.47, .914) and Karri Ramo (8-3-1, 2.37, .917), Thursday's scheduled starter. Former Sabres prospect Paul Byron averages 15:34 per game and has five goals, five assists.

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The Sabres will be hosting a holiday clothing drive at the next four home games beginning Thursday.

Fans are encouraged to bring new or gently used winter clothing, including hats, gloves, coats, boots, scarves and sweaters. Other clothing and cash will also be accepted and all donations go to the City Mission.

Fans that donate will receive a coupon entitling them to receive up to four tickets for \$40 each to one of 15 home games. That list starts with the Dec. 27 visit by the New York Islanders and continues with the New Year's Eve game against Tampa Bay and the Jan. 2 contest against Florida.

Also on the list are Jan. 13, Detroit; Jan. 15, Minnesota; Jan. 17, Philadelphia; Feb. 5, St. Louis; Feb. 7, Dallas; Feb. 8, New York Islanders; Feb. 15, Philadelphia; Feb. 20, New York Rangers; Feb. 26, Vancouver; March 14, New York Rangers; March 16, Washington and March 20, New Jersey.

Fans that donate also will receive a coupon for 25 fan-advantage points redeemable for prizes from the store in the Sabres' new Fan Advantage smartphone app.

Flames hope to bounce back against Sabres

By David Kalan

NHL.com

December 10, 2014

FLAMES (17-10-2) at SABRES (10-16-2)

TV: SNF, MSG-B, BELL TV

Season series: The Calgary Flames won each of the two games they played against the Buffalo Sabres in 2013-14. In the most recent game, the Sabres were held to 14 shots on goal in a 3-1 loss on March 18.

Flames team scope: The Flames are third in the Pacific Division but have lost their past two games. Prior to its recent stumble, Calgary had won four in a row. The Flames ended up on the wrong side of a 4-1 score against the Toronto Maple Leafs on Tuesday, but players remain positive despite back-to-back defeats. "I think the last two games for the most part we've been pretty good, just a couple stretches where turnovers led to goals," forward Paul Byron told calgaryflames.com Wednesday. "If we can take those out the team's been playing good otherwise." The Flames' visit to Buffalo is the second stop on a four-game road trip and the first of three games in four nights.

Sabres team scope: The Sabres are in last place in the Atlantic Division with 22 points in 28 games, but they enter Thursday after blanking the Stanley Cup-champion Los Angeles Kings 1-0 on Tuesday. Goalie Jhonas Enroth stopped all 34 shots and will get his ninth start in the past 10 games, but Sabres coach Ted Nolan hesitated to call him the No. 1 starter. "Calling a No. 1 I think is just status," Nolan told Buffalo Sports Radio WGR 550 on Wednesday. "Jhonas is playing well and anyone that plays the best is the number one." Buffalo may also have the added benefit of a charged-up Chris Stewart, who was not quiet about his displeasure with being a healthy scratch Tuesday. "I'm not happy about it," Stewart said after practice Wednesday. "I don't agree with being a healthy scratch, but you take it on the chin like a man. I'm happy the boys got the win and I'll put the work boots on and get ready for the next time I'm back in the lineup."

Sabres ready for creativity in trade talks

By Craig Custance

ESPN.com

December 10, 2014

BOCA RATON, Florida -- Standing a few feet from million-dollar yachts on one side and a resort swimming pool on the other during a warm, gorgeous day in south Florida would be paradise for most people. For Buffalo Sabres GM Tim Murray, however, it didn't seem that way. One could sense his uneasiness.

Murray was representing the Sabres at the NHL's Board of Governors meetings, but it was clear he'd much rather be at a hockey rink somewhere, evaluating players while inching the Sabres rebuild closer to success.

There was a bright side for Murray in this Florida trip, though. It gave him an opportunity to light a fire under his fellow GMs to spark trade talk.

The Sabres have been open to deal since the season started, and a strange thing has happened in recent weeks. The trade conversations have actually declined, compared to a month or so ago.

"Maybe I'm asking too much," Murray said, to which a few of his colleagues quickly nodded in agreement.

Why wouldn't he aim high? He doesn't have to do a thing right now. He reminds us he's not making trades for the sake of making trades, like teams that might be trying to shake up their rosters.

He made a golf analogy to explain where he stands: When you're golfing and you approach a hole, you typically know whether you have a shot at a par before you even tee off. It's all about how a hole matches up to your golf skills.

"Another hole, before you take a shot, you say I have no shot [at par]," Murray said.

It's about a match.

He knows the players he has available. He knows there are teams with which he has no shot of doing a deal. He also knows there are teams with available assets that match up nicely with the Buffalo players he's willing to move.

So now he waits for the hole to play out.

"I know there is interest out there in some of our players. I'll listen. I'm not pursuing trading half my team away," Murray said. "I give an outline of what I need back if I were to trade a certain player. I haven't said, 'I need two first-round picks for so-and-so, and that's the way it's going to be.' I'm willing to listen."

Decoding that a bit, it sounds like Murray has made his requests, and it's time for some counter-offers if other GMs think the prices he's set are too high.

"Maybe I'll put it back on my colleagues and say they haven't been creative enough," Murray said.

He then laughed and suggested that perhaps a GM who hasn't even been around a year should tone it down, but Murray can't help himself. This is who he is. Don't like his prices? Do something about it. He's one of the few GMs in position to sell right now -- there's no reason for him to be the aggressor.

Although players such as Chris Stewart, Tyler Myers and Drew Stafford have been in the trade market for the entire season, the play of both Sabres goalies could be opening up even more options for Murray and the Sabres.

On Tuesday night, Jhonas Enroth stopped all 34 shots he faced against a relentless Kings team to earn his first shutout of the season. Enroth now has a .918 save percentage and a pretty decent 7-10-1 record for a team that isn't particularly good. Michal Neuvirth has a .920 save percentage when he's out there, which supports the

theory that he still has the potential to grow into a No. 1 goalie.

Goalies aren't always easy to move, as there are a finite number of spots on NHL rosters, but last season's massive goalie exchange near the deadline between teams showed it's possible.

When we spoke, Murray hadn't received any trade calls on his goalies yet, but that will change if they keep it up, especially now that two of the most viable veteran free-agent options, Martin Brodeur and Ilya Bryzgalov, have disappeared from the market.

He's also at the point that he's ready to reach out to the agents of both Enroth and Neuvirth to get a sense of their interest in staying with the Sabres beyond this season. Both are unrestricted free agents after this season, and though Murray likes the young goaltending in the organization, he's not convinced it's ready for regular NHL time.

"I would like to see what they're thinking," Murray said of his goalies. "And saying that, down the road there's going to be some injuries with teams interested, and I'm going to have to listen to that, too."

While the Sabres goalies are driving their value north, forward Stewart was a healthy scratch on Tuesday against the Los Angeles Kings.

Sabres coach Ted Nolan told the Buffalo News that sitting sends a message Stewart needs to play a tougher brand of hockey than he has this season.

"He needs to play the way he can," Nolan said. "He's a big, powerful forward, but powerful forwards can't be playing a soft game. If they play a soft game, it doesn't fit into their makeup. We need him playing the way he can."

While there's no rush to trade others, this is a situation best solved sooner rather than later. A rift between Stewart and the coach doesn't help the cause, while teams such as Boston and Pittsburgh watch the situation closely.

Murray acknowledged that Stewart's production hasn't been what they'd hoped but suggested a change of surroundings would spark his game.

"We don't score goals as a team. It's hard to have individual success if you're not having team success," Murray said in a conversation before Stewart was benched. "We've seen thousands and thousands and thousands of times in the history of this league where a guy goes from a mediocre team to a good team, and -- boom -- his game flourishes."

As for the toughness, Murray pointed out Stewart has answered the bell three times in fights so far this season.

"He's fought [Brandon] Prust. He's fought [Milan] Lucic. He's stood up and fought guys who can fight. He's done very well in those fights," Murray said. "People know what he is -- he's a big, strong guy."

The player who would net the biggest return remains Myers, who is attractive on many fronts. He's still just 24 years old and has already crossed the 300-game threshold, which is what evaluators suggest it takes an NHL defenseman to get comfortable and find his game in this league.

Although his cap hit is at \$5.5 million through 2018-19, his actual salary is less than that from this season forward -- a nice bonus for teams on a budget. He's also a coveted right-handed shot.

There could be a deal if a team is willing to move a left-handed NHL defenseman along with a high-end prospect for Myers, but he's not a player the Sabres have to trade. There's a debate to be had as to whether it's wise to trade him at all, considering the large number of picks and prospects the organization already has stockpiled.

But with the rebuild still in full force, anything is possible in Buffalo. It's just going to take some creativity.

Sabres are ready to deal Chris Stewart

By Pierre LeBrun

ESPN.com

December 10, 2014

Chris Stewart was a healthy scratch Tuesday night against the Los Angeles Kings, and he hasn't played very well this season.

Still, there are teams who look at the pending unrestricted free-agent winger and wonder if he wouldn't play better on a better club.

Chris Stewart has just three goals and one assist in 27 games this season.

One thing's for sure: Buffalo Sabres general manager Tim Murray has let it be known that he's willing to move Stewart any time, but he's waiting for a fair offer.

The Boston Bruins and Ottawa Senators are among teams that have shown interest this season.

My sense is the Bruins don't believe they need to pay a big price for a player who has struggled like Stewart has. On the flip side, I think Buffalo believes Boston needs to step up in their offer.

The Bruins are definitely looking for a top-six winger. As I tweeted Friday, Boston closely scouted the St. Louis Blues last week, with GM Peter Chiarelli taking in one Blues game and assistant GM Don Sweeney another.

Meanwhile, a source told ESPN.com that Murray is willing to listen to deals for Buffalo's goalies as well. Jhonas Enroth and Michal Neuvirth are both slated to be unrestricted free agents July 1. My sense is Murray would be open to signing one of them and perhaps trading the other if he gets the right offer.

Sabres' Chris Stewart upset over healthy scratch

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
December 10, 2014

BUFFALO – Struggling Sabres winger Chris Stewart has three goals in 27 games this season, skated less than 10 minutes in each of his last two appearances and recently had his coach accuse him of doing “pirouettes” on the ice.

Still, a seething Stewart called getting scratched for Tuesday's 1-0 win against Los Angeles a “big surprise.”

“I'm not happy about it,” Stewart said today inside the First Niagara Center. “I don't agree with being a healthy scratch. But you take it on the chin like a man. I'm happy the boys got the win. That was a big two points. I put the work boots on and get ready for the next time I'm in the lineup.”

Stewart, who ducked the media Tuesday, is clearly upset Sabres coach Ted Nolan accused him of “playing a soft game.” Stewart has fought heavyweights Brandon Prust and Milan Lucic this season.

“I don't think I'm a soft player,” he said. “You can ask Prust, you can ask Lucic about how soft I am. I'm sure they'll have a good answer for you.”

Nolan believes some have taken his “soft” comment too literally.

“When I said ‘soft’ the other day, sometimes, like that (Geico) commercial on TV, people take it literally, ‘I want a million bucks and a whole bunch of deer show up,’” he said. “So I didn't mean he was soft. I meant we need him playing harder as a power forward.”

Nolan likes Stewart's anger.

“He should be angry,” Nolan said. “Anybody who gets scratched should be disappointed, want to get back in there. He's no different. So he'll get back in eventually.”

Stewart still hasn't spoken to Nolan.

“If the coach wants to talk to you, he brings you in, right?” Stewart said. “I don't think there's much to talk about. I got to elevate my play. I'm not happy with my play, either. I think you can talk about it, but at the end of the day you got to be better.”

Nolan said he will chat with Stewart soon.

The Sabres just beat the defending Stanley Cup champions. They play Calgary on Thursday. Will Stewart have to wait to return?

“Not necessarily,” Nolan said. “That's the toughest part, we had 20 guys that played their hearts out last night, played hard, hard.”

In other news, Sabres winger Tyler Ennis had a maintenance day today. Defenseman Andrej Meszaros (possible concussion) has been cleared to play. Meanwhile, defenseman Tyson Strachan (lower body) is a little bit away, Nolan said.

Goalie Jhonas Enroth will start against the Flames.

Those road tripping Sabres fans

By Andrew Kulyk and Peter Farrell

Artvoice

December 10, 2014

If there's one thing you're sure to find anywhere across the country, it's expats from Buffalo, who have left Western New York to seek careers, personal growth, or just retirement, elsewhere. That is especially true down in Florida, where tens of thousands of Buffalo folks make their homes in places like Tampa Bay and the south Florida cities of Miami and Fort Lauderdale.

And while enthusiasm is tempered just a bit this season in a Buffalo Sabres rebuilding year, nevertheless fans showed up in droves when the team made its first of two swings through the Sunshine State this past week.

"We had a great crowd on hand, at least 100 and probably many more," said Sabres broadcast game night host Brian Duff, who emceed this season's first Road Crew event at an Irish pub in nearby Brandon, just outside of Tampa.

It was hard to gauge the Buffalo presence at Tampa's Amalie Center (née Ice Palace) amongst the crowd of almost 18,000. Buffalo did not score a goal, although the brawl filled third period kept fans entertained. Outside the arena at the popular Hattricks sports bar, server manager Tamara (she didn't give her last name) said that although her establishment is a popular hangout for visiting fans, Sabres fans always stand out for their numbers and their support.

"I almost cry for your team and really wish you guys could win yourselves a Stanley Cup. Nobody deserves it more than Buffalo does," said Tamara, an Edmonton transplant who was there in the 80s for her Oilers' glory years. "I see such passion in your hearts, hope in your voices, and pain in your eyes. I hope (Coach Ted) Nolan turns things around for you he's the best."

Down in South Florida, the Buffalo enthusiasm lies more in the Bills and their rivalry with the Miami Dolphins. Bills Backers assemble at Packy's Sports Bar just north of Fort Lauderdale, and new owner Jeff Jakonczuk, an admitted Dolphins fan, is amazed at the level of support he sees each game day Sunday. "The fans pack the place, it's wall to wall in here. We serve up the beef on weck, we fly in Sahlens hot dogs, it's a great mix of mostly locals but some tourists as well."

Would Jakonczuk be surprised to hear that Buffalo fans also make their noise heard as visitors to Florida Panthers games? "Not at all," replied Jakonczuk. "We get visiting hockey fans here from all over, lots of Canadians, but I wouldn't be surprised if Sabres supporters outnumber the locals at the game tonight in the stands."

Back at the Road Crew event, Sabres coaches, the broadcast team, and former players Rob Ray and Danny Gare were mingling with and doing photo opps with the fans and enjoying food and drink. One fan in particular stood out for Brian Duff.

"She was wearing a RJ (Rick Jeanneret) commemorative cap which was put out to help raise funds for cancer research," said Duff. "I remarked to the lady, whose name I unfortunately never got, how nice it was for her to support such a great cause. At which point she took off the cap, and I saw she had no hair. The lady informed me that she was battling stage 4 cancer, her doctors at one time told her she had two weeks to live and that was a year ago."

Duff said that Jeanneret had served as an inspiration for her to continue her fight, and that she wore that hat most of the time. "All I could do is ask her if I could give her a big hug and she gladly obliged. These are the moments that make this job so inspirational and so worthwhile," said Duff.

The Sabres make one more trip down that way this season, with games at Florida on February 28 and at Tampa on March 3. Couple that with the start of the baseball spring training schedule in the Grapefruit League, and you have the makings of a great sports vacation.

TARO SEZ (Penalty edition)...

- Game misconduct: To the Florida Panthers video crew, for foisting a thoughtless and tasteless opening video montage of the recent Buffalo snowstorm at last Saturday's game at the BB&T Center, juxtaposed with their team mascot Stanley Panther happily frolicking in the Florida sun. Panthers' GM Dale Tallon reportedly apologized to Sabres owner Terry Pegula and GM Tim Murray.
- 2 minute minor: To the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation, for keeping the newly unveiled statue of Tim Horton secured behind chain link fencing while work finishes on the replica canals on the Aud Block. After some complaints, the fencing was removed, and fans can now get right up to the statue for a photo opportunity.
- 10 minute misconduct: To PuckStop. Yes, penalty assessed to this corner, for incorrectly spelling the name of Hockey Night In Canada's Ron MacLean repeatedly in our last column, and also reporting that he resides in the Buffalo area. It is retired HNIC analyst Harry Neale who at one time made the regular commute to Canada from his home in Amherst, not MacLean. Sportsnet's Senior Communication Manager called us out for our gaffe, and we take our lumps with contrition and apology.

Sabres' Stewart is angry about benching

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

December 10, 2014

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Of course Chris Stewart wasn't happy that he was a healthy scratch against the Kings. He practiced for an extra-long time on Wednesday and said Tuesday came as a surprise to him, "Yes, I'd say a big surprise. I'm not happy about it, I don't agree with being a healthy scratch, but you take it on the chin like a man. I'm happy the boys got the win and I'll put the work boots on and get ready for the next time I'm back in the lineup." Nolan added, "He should be angry, anybody that gets scratched should be disappointed and want to get back in there so, he's no different."

When Stewart was asked about his ice-time dwindling he admitted, that maybe he did see it coming, "You get benched, there's not really a conversation to have. I think that speaks for itself. I played seven minutes in Florida, so yes I saw it coming."

As of the end of practice on Wednesday, Stewart and Ted Nolan had not spoken. Nolan said, "Sometimes no words is louder than words sometimes and people get the message. The only thing we're trying to do with Stewie is get him to play hard like everybody else and sometimes how you send a message with certain people and it is different than others, so he'll rebound, he's a pro, he's a powerful forward in this league and he's a good player."

Stewart said it's not his job to go to the head coach, "If the coach wants to talk to you he brings you in, but I don't think there's much to talk about, I've got to elevate my play. I'm not happy with my play either. You can talk about it, but at the end of the day you get to be about it."

On Tuesday Nolan said Stewart had been playing soft and that of course really annoyed Stewart, "I don't think I'm a soft player, you can ask Prust, you can ask Lucic how soft I am and I'm sure they'll have a better answer for you." Nolan backtracked on Wednesday, when I said soft sometimes people take it literally, so I didn't mean he was soft, we need him playing harder as a power forward."

There are many trade rumors out there because Stewart is an unrestricted free agent at the end of this season. Many feel sitting him hurts his trade value. Stewart said, "I can't really read into that, I can only take it one day at a time. I'll say this isn't an ideal situation to be in for my contract year, but I've got to stay positive and you can't really read into all the speculation. I said since I got here, as long as I'm a Buffalo Sabre, I'm just going to worry about being here."

Stewart thinks he knows what he has to do to play well. He also feels he can still score and do well in this league, "I feel like I'm working and some funny things happen in this game. I'm capable of getting hot and rallying off some goals here and I just have to wait for that opportunity." The big winger added, "All throughout my career I've been an offensive guy, but when things aren't going your way you've got to contribute physically, so I guess I've got to start looking for some big hits and chasing some hits and bring physical play. I guess that's what he wants out of me."

Nolan said at the end of last season that he hopes Stewart isn't traded because he feels he can be part of the long term solution. Nolan said on Wednesday, "Stewie's going to be a big part of this team, we want him to be a big part of this team, but sometimes when you get off course a little bit, you need to sit back and watch and get back in there."

The thing Stewart has to realize is the team just played a good game and beat the defending champions. Nolan realizes that may make it difficult to put him in against Calgary, "That's the toughest part, we had 20 players that played their hearts out last night and we're talking about a healthy scratch. It's part of the game, but the guys that played last night played hard."

Sabres' Nolan gives Ennis a rest day

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

December 10, 2014

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Tyler Ennis was given a day off by Ted Nolan to get rest, but should be OK. Earlier this season, Ennis missed quite a few practices as he nursed a groin injury.

Tyson Strachan didn't practice and Nolan said he'll be out a little while. Nolan said, "Still a little bit away, his injury's one of the ones where you don't want to push him too soon and be patient, so it's going to take a little time."

Andrej Meszaros has been cleared by doctors after suffering a concussion.

Jhonas Enroth will try to build on shutting out the defending Stanley Cup champions as Nolan said he'll face the Flames on Thursday. Nolan said on this team, there's no such thing as the number one goalie overall, "Calling a number one I think is just status, Jhonas is playing well and anyone that plays the best is the number one."

The Flames are in town and did practice at the arena on Wednesday.

Stone's Buddies brings Sabres players to Women and Children's

By Mark Belcher

WIVB

December 10, 2014

BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) – An annual tradition for the Buffalo Sabres brings smiles to the faces of not only kids with disabilities, but the players, too.

The team and their mascot Sabre Tooth were at Women and Children's Hospital Wednesday.

"You feel so much just for the families and these kids that are going through all these different things, so we hope that we can make a few people happy today," Tyson Strachan, a Sabres defenseman, said.

Many of the children the players are visiting have chronic illnesses and are fighting them, with what the players call a "great deal of courage."

The Sabres players make the trip annually because of a boy who died nearly 10 years ago. Stone Filipovich died at 4-years-old, and after that, Stone's Buddies program was born.

"It's not only cancer. It's not only our oncology patients. It's really to make them feel like there's a support system for them," Joanne Koessler, Stone's Buddies director said. "When you have a chronically ill child, your family and your friends typically don't really understand your struggles"

Kids are still benefitting from a realization Koessler had after Stone died. They had to do more for children, to give them hope and happiness.

Sabres players worked to spread those feelings Wednesday. They worked with kids like Kyle Reimer, a child with a close connection to the Sabres. He plays sled hockey and has had several goals this season.

"We've been playing well lately, and it's nice to kind of step away for a day and see some kids, then get back at it tomorrow," Tyler Ennis, a Sabres center said.

William Lucas, a child who has had a host of brain surgeries, said he thinks the team is going to finish the season out strong.

"Whatever they do is going to be awesome, and cool, and fantastic and fantabulous!"

Nolan wants to see Stewart elevate his play

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

December 10, 2014

After a 1-0 victory over the reigning Stanley Cup champion Los Angeles Kings on Tuesday, Buffalo Sabres coach Ted Nolan will have some lineup decisions to make come Thursday night when the Calgary Flames are in town.

Chris Stewart found himself on the outside looking in as a healthy scratch. It's yet to be determined if he'll play Thursday or not.

"That's the toughest part. We've got 20 guys that played their hearts out last night and played hard," Nolan said. "Now we're talking about a healthy scratch is one thing – but those things are part of the game. The guys who played last night played hard."

Stewart has three goals and an assist in 27 games this season. Two of those goals have come in his past six games.

"I've got to elevate my play," Stewart said after practice at First Niagara Center where he was one of the last players off the ice. "I'm not happy with my play either. You can talk about it, but at the end of the day, you've got to be about it."

At 6-foot-2, 231 pounds, Stewart has shown that he can be a big, physical force that can contribute offensively. He's scored at least 15 goals five times in his seven-year career and put in 28 back in both 2009-10 and 2010-11. Nolan wants to see him contribute as an integral part of the team.

"He'll rebound. He's a pro. He's a powerful forward in this League," Nolan said. "He's a good player and when I said 'soft' the other day, sometimes people, like in that commercial on TV, you take it literally. 'I want a million bucks' and a whole bunch of deer show up."

"I didn't mean he was soft. I meant we need him playing harder as a power forward."

FILLING IN

Tyler Ennis, who scored the game winner against L.A., was given a maintenance day so Stewart took his place in practice on the team's top line. On the first power-play unit, Brian Flynn filled in.

"It was an acknowledgement of 'Let's try. Let's try something else.' The one thing about Flynn, he's a very intelligent player," Nolan said. "He can adapt, he can be on penalty kills. He's on the last minute of play for us a lot of times. He's very reliable, he's dependable and he's very, very intelligent. You need intelligent people on the power play."

Andrej Meszaros was a full participant in practice. He sustained a concussion on Nov. 28 but has been cleared for full activity.

Tyson Strachan missed another day of practice. He hasn't played in the past two games due to a lower-body injury and Nolan said they'll take their time in bringing him back to full speed.

Jhonas Enroth will start in goal after a 34-save shutout performance on Tuesday.

TUESDAY'S PRACTICE

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

4 Josh Gorges – 57 Tyler Myers
51 Nikita Zadorov – 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
6 Mike Weber – 61 Andre Benoit
41 Andrej Meszaros

1 Jhonas Enroth
34 Michal Neuvirth

Did Not Practice: 24 Tyson Strachan (injured, lower body), 31 Matt Hackett (injured reserve, knee), 63 Tyler Ennis (maintenance day)

Down on the farm

By Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

December 10, 2014

THE WEEK THAT WAS

Friday, December 5: BINGHAMTON 4 – AMERKS 1

The Binghamton Senators scored twice in a span of 2:40 in the second period and tacked on two more in the third as the B-Sens completed a two-game sweep of the Rochester Americans with a 4-1 win at The Blue Cross Arena. The loss was the second in a row and third against Binghamton so far this season. Johan Larsson scored the lone goal for the Amerks during the middle frame, with Mikhail Grigorenko and captain Drew Bagnall adding assists on the night. Nathan Lieuwen started between the pipes for Rochester and finished with 24 saves on 28 shots in the defeat.

Saturday, December 6: SYRACUSE 2 – AMERKS 0

Despite a near-perfect effort from starting goaltender Andrey Makarov, the Rochester Americans were blanked by the Syracuse Crunch 2-0 at the War Memorial at Oncenter in Syracuse. It was a reversal of fortunes for both clubs, as Syracuse responded with a shutout of its own against Rochester following a 3-0 Amerks win in Syracuse back on Oct. 31. The story for the Amerks was Makarov, who continued his stingy play against the Crunch this season. Makarov stopped 33 of the 34 shots he faced in the losing effort, and has only allowed one goal on the 72 shots he has faced in two matchups against the Crunch this season.

Sunday, December 7: TORONTO 3 – AMERKS 0

The Toronto Marlies scored once in each period and used a 25-save shutout from rookie goaltender Antoine Bibeau to defeat the Rochester Americans by a 3-0 at Ricoh Coliseum. The loss marks the second straight game the Amerks were shutout and extends Rochester's current losing streak to four games. Veteran forward Matt Ellis finished with a team-high five shots while Nathan Lieuwen stopped 15 of the 17 shots he faced in the losing effort.

UPCOMING GAMES

- Wednesday, December 10: Rochester @ Utica, 7 p.m.
- Friday, December 12: Rochester @ Hamilton, 7:30 p.m.
- **Saturday, December 13: Hamilton @ Rochester, 7:35 p.m. – BUY TICKETS**
- **Wednesday December 17: Syracuse @ Rochester, 7:05 p.m. – BUY TICKETS**

NOTES

* **Phil Varone** leads the team in scoring with 22 points (6+16), including 12 assists in his last 13 games.

* **Mikhail Grigorenko** and **Luke Adam** are tied for the team lead with seven goals each

* **Chad Ruhwedel's** 13 points (4+9) top all Amerks defensemen; all four goals have come on the power play

* **Joel Armia** has 15 points (6+9) in 19 games, but has missed the last five with an upper-body injury.

* Rochester also remains one of just three AHL teams to have six players with 15 or more points: **Varone, Adam, Armia, Tim Schaller, Grigorenko** and **Johan Larsson**.