



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*January 2, 2015*

## **Lightning roll to beat Sabres 5-1**

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

December 31, 2014

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Steven Stamkos doesn't have to carry Tampa Bay's offensive load given how the Lightning's second line is producing.

With Stamkos held off the scoresheet, Ondrej Palat and his linemates combined to score three of the Lightning's four goals in the final 21 minutes to key a 5-1 victory over the banged-up and flu-riddled Buffalo Sabres on Wednesday night.

Palat scored the go-ahead goal and added three assists. Nikita Kucherov had two goals and an assist, and center Tyler Johnson set up three goals in helping the Lightning reclaim the Eastern Conference lead.

"Since that line's been put together, they've done some pretty magical things," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "When you start getting that chemistry going, hopefully the wins start to mount a little bit."

The Lightning (24-11-4) won their fourth straight and moved a point ahead of both Pittsburgh and the New York Islanders. Tampa Bay rode the momentum of winning three straight at home and improved to 2-3-2 in its past eight road games.

The Lightning's power play is starting to click again with Palat's goal coming during a man-advantage with 58 seconds left in the second period. With Johnson drawing the attention of all four Sabres defenders along the right boards, he slipped a pass across to a wide open Palat, who snapped a shot inside the near post.

They finished 1 for 3 with the man advantage, and have scored power-play goals in consecutive games after going 0 for 21 during a five-game drought.

The win came at the expense of the depleted Sabres (14-21-3), who dropped to 1-5-1 in their past seven. Captain Brian Gionta (upper body) and defensemen Tyler Myers (lower body) and Rasmus Ristolainen (illness) were among the regulars not in the lineup.

Tyler Ennis scored the lone goal in a game Buffalo was outshot 25-11 overall and 14-1 in the final period. A sarcastic cheer went up when Matt Moulson recorded Buffalo's only shot of the third with 4:41 left in the period.

"Banged up, Flu. Head colds. Everything," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "You walk in that locker room and that's all they're doing is coughing and sniffing. That's not an excuse. That's just fact."

Nolan couldn't excuse his team for the numerous defensive breakdowns that led to Lightning goals.

"Guys not scoring aren't even checking, so that's a bad combination," Nolan said.

The Lightning made up for a slow start in a game that wasn't decided until the third period.

Brett Connolly and Kucherov scored 3:20 apart in the third, and Kucherov finished the rout with 1:55 left.

"It was just a weird game," Cooper said. "It was like nobody wanted to take control of the game, and then that line did, and we came out on top."

Connolly's goal 5:20 into the third came as a result of a couple of fortunate bounces, and 9 seconds after the Sabres had killed a penalty.

Stralman's slap shot from the right point hit Connolly in front, and the puck ricocheted off Sabres defenseman Nikita Zadorov, who was facing the net. The puck bounced back into the crease, where Connolly stuffed it inside the left post.

Matthew Carle also scored for Tampa Bay.

Rookie goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 10 shots in his fourth NHL game, a day after being called up from AHL Syracuse. He was filling in for starter Ben Bishop, who is day to day after aggravating a lower-body injury.

NOTES: With Lightning D Radko Gudas day to day with a lower-body injury, Nikita Nesterov made his NHL debut after being called up earlier Wednesday from Syracuse. He was leading Syracuse defensemen with 14 points (three goals, 11 assists) in 32 games. ... Sabres D Tyson Strachan returned after missing five games with a lower-body injury. ... The Lightning kicked off a four-game road trip.

## **Sabres drop the ball in New Year's Eve loss to Lightning**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

December 31, 2014

Despite sitting near the bottom of the NHL, the Sabres have been impressive at giving the home fans reason to celebrate. On one of the biggest party nights of the year, the sellout crowd had to find its entertainment elsewhere.

Unless, of course, some masochist is a fan of nonexistent offense and defensive breakdowns.

Tampa Bay muzzled the Sabres and their fans Wednesday night and left First Niagara Center with a 5-1 victory. Buffalo was 9-2 in its previous 11 home games, but the recent team slide took precedence. The Sabres stumbled to 1-5-1 in their last seven overall, and this one turned ugly during the final period.

The Lightning outshot the Sabres, 14-1, during the final 20 minutes and scored three times to pull away. Tampa finished the game with a 25-11 shot advantage as Buffalo generated next to nothing.

"We didn't play the way we needed to in order to give ourselves a chance to win," alternate captain Josh Gorges said. "When you are doing the right things and playing the right way, you give yourself a chance to win. You're not going to win every night, even if you play a good game, but you give yourself a chance.

"You play the way we played tonight and some of the other nights lately, you don't have a chance. It's just not the right way to play hockey.

The Lightning have a well-earned reputation as an offensive juggernaut, but their defense helped send the 19,070 fans toward the exits with plenty of time left on the clock. The faithful who remained unleashed a Bronx cheer with 4:40 left when Matt Moulson's mundane attempt from the blue line reached Lightning goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy, giving Buffalo its only shot of the third.

"We're there for two periods, then in the third we got outplayed badly and lose the game," Sabres right wing Tyler Ennis said. "It's frustrating for everyone."

Sabres goalie Jhonas Enroth let his frustration out. As the clock struck zero, the netminder broke his stick in half across the goal post and threw it over the net. He lobbed an obscenity to no one in particular as he bolted from the dressing room.

Enroth had reason to be angry. He had little to no chance on any of the goals, most of which came on cross-ice plays or from the doorstep.

"We didn't do a very good job of clearing out guys on the back door for Jhonas," defenseman Mike Weber said. "We really hung him out to dry."

The Sabres' terrible ending took away from a decent opening two periods, at least from an effort standpoint. Buffalo held Tampa, which is second in the league in scoring, to just 11 shots through 40 minutes.

But the Lightning scored a power-play goal with 58 seconds remaining in the middle period to take a 2-1 lead. Once they made it 3-1 with 5:20 gone in the third, the game was over.

"The early one took the wind out our sails there," Weber said. "We just never recovered."

It was a standoff early. The teams boosted their shooting percentages during the first period, trading goals despite a total of just 10 shots. Tampa scored once on six attempts, while the Sabres found the net once on only four.

The Lightning's Matt Carle opened the scoring with 7:48 gone, taking a cross-ice pass from Ondrej Palat and ripping it through traffic and Enroth. Buffalo's beleaguered power play took advantage of a fortunate hop to tie it five minutes later. Ennis' blast from near the right point hit the stick of Tampa defenseman Victor Hedman and bounced by rookie goalie Vasilevskiy.

The Sabres' slumping penalty kill was on the ice when Tampa went up, 2-1. The unit has allowed eight goals in the last seven games. Even if the penalty kill had been perfect, not many teams are going to win with just 11 shots.

"We knew what we had in front of us coming into this, and I think we got outworked," center Cody McCormick said. "That's not something that we want to creep into our game."

The Lightning summoned Vasilevskiy, one of their top prospects, from Syracuse for his fourth NHL game. The 19th overall pick in the 2012 draft is in his inaugural season in North America after excelling in the Kontinental Hockey League. He has a .919 save percentage in the minors and put up a .940 in his first three starts with Tampa.

Lightning starter Ben Bishop is 18-6-2 with a .914 and 2.29 goals-against average, while usual backup Evgeni Nabokov is 3-4-2 with a .893 save percentage.

"These aren't circumstances where Vasilevskiy is coming in to take a job," Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper said. "I guess if his play goes above and beyond, we'd have to re-evaluate. But our goal with Vasy is coming and learning the North American league game, and you're learning in the exact league you should be doing it. Three-fourths of our team learned it in that league, as well as their coach, so it's proven to work."

## **Sabres notebook: Age improves Grigorenko's comfort level**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

December 31, 2014

A high skill set and outgoing personality couldn't help Mikhail Grigorenko overcome one of his biggest problems the previous two years – his age. It's tough for most 18- and 19-year-olds to fit in. Grigorenko, who bounced from the NHL to juniors, found that out.

Things are going much better this season.

"I feel more comfortable around the guys and in the locker room," the 20-year-old said Wednesday before a 5-1 loss to Tampa Bay. "I remember my first year, sometimes it was hard to understand things, even just the language and stuff. I was 18 years old and guys thought I was too young, which I guess is normal.

"When you're a kid around men, it's a little different. Now I feel like I'm not a kid anymore, and that's the big difference."

Grigorenko, who excelled in training camp before starting the season in Rochester, played his seventh game for the Sabres on Wednesday. The center hopes there are plenty more in his future.

"I'm back in the NHL, and hopefully I'll stay here forever," he said with his usual smile in First Niagara Center.

Grigorenko, who has seven goals and 22 points in 30 games with the Amerks, seems to have absorbed coach Ted Nolan's message that nothing will be given to anyone. Many in the organization thought the No. 12 overall pick in 2012 carried an air of entitlement during his first couple of go-rounds with the club.

"I've been around for a couple years, so I understand things better," Grigorenko said. "I understand what it takes. I understand everyone is fighting for their jobs, and the best players are going to play.

"Obviously, people are going to help you, but no one is going to make you play if someone is better than you, which is a different mindset."

Nolan likes what he has seen from Grigorenko, who has no goals and one assist with the Sabres while skating alongside wings Cody Hodgson and Chris Stewart.

"He's been good," Nolan said. "Sometimes you've got to really look for those subtle, smart plays that smart players do. Sometimes they don't show up on the score sheet, but he's made some really shifty, nifty passes to Stewart and Hodgson the past few games. Direct of that, I think both those players got better because of it."

...

Seven years ago today, the Sabres took the game outside for the first Winter Classic. Pittsburgh visited Buffalo and Ralph Wilson Stadium, and the memories remain strong for the lone Sabres player left – even if he didn't skate in the game.

"Unfortunately, I had a concussion for the game, but they let me go out for warmups," right wing Drew Stafford said. "You kind of get numb to playing in front of 18,000 fans, but when you have 80,000 screaming fans in a big bowl and it's snowing out, it's pretty incredible."

After taking part in the pregame, Stafford watched the Ice Bowl from the suites with his parents. He hopes Buffalo gets another chance to host the Winter Classic, which is being played Thursday between the Capitals and Chicago in Washington.

"I'm kind of hoping someday they bring one back to have it at The Ralph because I think the experience the fans had there, and also the players, it's got to be one of the better venues for it," Stafford said.

...

Buffalo babies born at two Kaleida Health hospitals will again be welcomed to the world with a message from the Sabres. The Sabres will provide all newborns at Women and Children's Hospital and Millard Fillmore Suburban with a "Future No. 1 Draft Pick" Halo SleepSack Swaddle, a signed letter from team owner Terry Pegula and a sleep safety packet.

Sabres President Ted Black and Kaleida President and CEO Jody L. Lomeo will relaunch the program with the area's first babies at 10:30 a.m. Thursday in Women and Children's Hospital. The two Kaleida hospitals deliver 5,000 babies annually.

"It's very special for our organization to be a part of such an important and intimate moment for the families of these newborns," said Black. "The Sabres share a great bond with this community, and it's our hope that this program helps to strengthen that bond and usher in a new generation of Sabres fans."

...

Sabres defenseman Tyson Strachan returned to the lineup after missing five games with a lower-body injury. He replaced Andre Benoit. Blue-liner Rasmus Ristolainen, who missed 1½ games with the flu, took part in the morning skate but did not play.

"This is the first time he touched the ice in four, five days," Nolan said, "so we're going to let him get his feet back underneath him and put him in next game."

## **Sabres prospect Reinhart is big fish on world stage**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

December 31, 2014

MONTREAL – Buffalo Sabres fans have to take a chill pill. Seriously. If you don't get Connor McDavid or Jack Eichel – and there's still 44 games and a lottery for that to shake out – the likely scenario is you're going to get some other future star with what figures to be another top-5 pick.

And then consider this point: You already have the biggest stud at the World Junior Championships.

No question McDavid and Eichel are good, but the best player on the ice at the Bell Centre the last week has been Sam Reinhart. And that's the best news Sabres fans and General Manager Tim Murray could get.

With Murray in the stands, Reinhart had a goal and two assists Wednesday night as Team Canada beat Team USA, 5-3, in the hotly anticipated finish to group play. He led all players with six shots on goal. He went 18-5 on faceoffs. It was a dominant performance at both ends of the ice.

Reinhart's line was normally matched against Eichel, who had one assist and did very little. Reinhart was on the ice in the chaotic final minute, when he scored one empty-net goal and assisted on Max Domi's clincher that sandwiched a U.S. goal.

Reinhart is leading the tournament in scoring. Not McDavid or Eichel. In four games, Reinhart has three goals, eight points and a plus-9 rating.

What does McDavid think of him?

"He's unbelievable," The Next Great One said of Reinhart. "He's been one of our best forwards in everything he does. He's a complete two-way player."

Reinhart set up Domi with a sweet backhand feed to open the scoring at 7:07 of the second period. His empty-netter with 43 seconds left that made it 4-2 was punctuated by a big fist pump and howl, and he went to the bench to celebrate.

When Dylan Larkin scored 12 seconds later to get the Americans back within a goal, Reinhart and his line hopped back on the ice. The U.S. came close to a miracle tying goal, but Canada survived. Reinhart made the final play with a neat diagonal dump pass to Domi in the neutral zone for the empty-netter with four seconds left to finally end the suspense.

Reinhart was swarmed in the media mixed zone after the game, and he wasn't talking about himself very much.

"We're more and more confident every game," he said. "We have to stay humble about it. It's going good for now."

I asked Reinhart the question that brought that answer. I was a foot away from him so he heard it fine. I asked about him. Not his team or his line. That was his answer. And it says volumes.

You have to like that mentality.

When we saw Reinhart struggle during his NHL tryout, it was really about his physical strength. He needs to work on his conditioning, just like Nikita Zadorov and Rasmus Ristolainen and Mikhail Grigorenko have been forced to do.

Reinhart's hockey sense says star, as it should. The Sabres got the No. 2 overall pick and it was crushing for Murray to have his first top choice not be good enough to stick with one of the NHL's bottom teams.

So Reinhart went back to junior and re-established the fact he could score. The Sabres were almost certainly releasing him for this tournament had he stayed in the NHL, and his dominance is a best-case scenario.

"Sam is a big, big part of our team," said Canada coach Benoit Groulx. "When he's on the ice and touches the puck, he controls the puck and makes plays for his wingers every time. It's a good play for our team ... When he's on the ice, good things happen for us."

Plenty of good things happened in this one, as a crowd of about 18,000 chanted and roared and sang its way through an epic battle. The teams combined for 71 shots on goal (43 by Canada), skated like the wind and issued body checks that registered all the way up to the press box eight floors above the ice.

"It was great," Reinhart said. "Right from the start, the crowd got big into it and that only helps us out more."

Eichel nearly scored on a rebound 30 seconds into the game and didn't come close again.

McDavid had an assist on Curtis Lazar's goal at 10:01 of the third period that put Canada up, 3-1, and said there was no relief in having the long-awaited showdown complete.

"I wasn't really thinking about it," McDavid said. "To say you want to skip a game isn't fair. It's Canada-US. Montreal. New Year's. It's so exciting. I think we all enjoyed it."

"After the first period, we kind of relaxed and focused on our own game a little more as opposed to the game outside the game," Reinhart said. "I think we were better for it the last two periods."

Sabres fans should have loved this game. USA forward and Murray trade acquisition Hudson Fasching had a sweet assist on Dylan Larkin's third-period goal. The best defenseman on the ice? It sure looked like USA's Noah Hanifan, who most observers feel will be the first non-McEichel player drafted come June.

And which team very well could have the No. 3 pick and possibly take a guy compared to Ryan Suter, Duncan Keith or Drew Doughty? Uh-huh.

As for this tournament, Canada wins Group A at 4-0 and plays upstart Denmark in the quarterfinals Friday in Toronto. Team USA (3-1) has a much tougher quarterfinal against Russia. Maybe they play for a gold medal Monday night. Canada will be depending on its No. 1 center to bring home the gold for the first time since 2009.

In this tourney, the No. 1 center for our friends north of the border is not named McDavid.

## **Sabres showing effects of depleted roster**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

January 1, 2015

Ted Nolan knows no one wants to hear excuses. Handling adversity is part of professional sports.

But as the Sabres' coach continually fills out lineup cards without a captain, top defensemen or reliable forwards, excuses quickly turn into reality – the kind of reality that leads to a 1-5-1 slump.

"The one thing you never want to do is have excuses and say, 'We're beat up. We're injured,' " Nolan said Thursday. "But facts is facts. We are. We have a lot of guys out of our lineup."

Buffalo was on a 10-3 hot streak Dec. 15. Since then, the Sabres have played games without forwards Brian Gionta, Matt Moulson, Marcus Foligno, Torrey Mitchell, Cody McCormick and Patrick Kaleta, and defensemen Tyler Myers, Josh Gorges, Rasmus Ristolainen, Mike Weber and Tyson Strachan.

"If you look at our last seven games or so and look at the man power we lost, it's a long list," said Nolan, whose team hosts Florida on Friday. "When that happens, you have a tendency to overtax some lines and put people in position of a little more minutes. Everything's a little bit out of whack."

The run of illness and injury has sent things off-kilter on the ice and in the dressing room. Buffalo has been outscored, 33-15, during the slide. The players have been avoiding each other as much as the net.

"You walk in that locker room, that's all everyone is doing is coughing and sniffing," Nolan said. "That's not an excuse, that's just fact."

As of Tuesday, the Sabres ranked ninth in the NHL in man-games lost, according to ManGamesLost.com. Buffalo was at 132, behind only Anaheim (232), Columbus (222), Colorado (194), Philadelphia (162), New Jersey (147), Pittsburgh (146), Washington (138) and the New York Islanders (136).

"We're not as mentally sharp as we should be, and then when that happens you get the frustration part in certain players," Nolan said. "Once we get everybody back, we should be fine."

Ristolainen will return Friday after missing two games with the flu. To clear out the sudden logjam on defense - Weber and Strachan have returned during the last week - the Sabres sent Mark Pysyk back to Rochester.

Ristolainen skated with Nikita Zadorov during Thursday's practice, while Gorges was with Strachan. Andrej Meszaros and Andre Benoit made up the other pair as Weber took a maintenance day.

Nolan made plenty of changes up front, too. Of course, those were necessary after the Sabres took just 11 shots against the Lightning.

The first line of Zemgus Girgensons in the middle of Moulson and right wing Tyler Ennis remained intact. Mikhail Grigorenko took over the second line with left wing Brian Flynn and right wing Chris Stewart. McCormick was in the middle of Cody Hodgson and Drew Stafford, while Johan Larsson centered for Nicolas Deslauriers and Kaleta.

"We changed up a couple line combinations just to try to shake it up here a little bit," Nolan said. "Hopefully, by shaking it up you get a different result."

...

Jhonas Enroth's last act on the ice in 2014 was breaking his stick in half across the goal post and chucking it over the net. With 2015 underway, that frustration is so out of date.

"That was last year," Enroth said. "You've got to move forward with the new year here."

Enroth didn't get much help in the 5-1 loss to the Lightning as Tampa scored on cross-ice passes and point-blank chances. Though his teammates could have taken Enroth's stick splintering as frustration toward them, the goalie said he's just mad at himself.

Enroth is 1-3-1 in his last five starts. His save percentage has dropped from .916 to .908 and his goals-against average has ballooned from 2.96 to 3.16.

"I wasn't happy with giving up five goals and giving up four the night before that," he said. "It's been frustrating the last couple of games. I obviously don't like giving up goals, so I was a little bit mad after the game. I'm trying to stay positive, trying to get back to that good stretch we had.

"The focus is try to stay positive and try to focus on small details, having good habits."

...

Myers, who is week-to-week with a lower-body injury suffered Dec. 20, skated before practice. He's expected to skip Saturday's game in New York against the Rangers but could join the Sabres during the final three games of next week's road trip (New Jersey, Carolina or Tampa Bay).

"He's getting a lot better," Nolan said. "A couple days ago, he wasn't. It must be the new year."

## **Palat, Lightning defeat Sabres for fourth straight win**

By Joe Yerdon

NHL.com

December 31, 2014

**BUFFALO** -- The Tampa Bay Lightning were looking for a way to end their woes on the road and found the solution with their second line.

Ondrej Palat had a goal and three assists, and linemate Nikita Kucherov had two goals and an assist to lead the Lightning to a 5-1 win against the Buffalo Sabres at First Niagara Center on Wednesday.

Palat gave the Lightning a 2-1 lead with a power-play goal with 58 seconds remaining in the second period. With Sabres forward Nick Deslauriers in the penalty box, Palat took a pass from Tyler Johnson and put a snap shot over goalie Jhonas Enroth's right shoulder for his ninth goal.

"Since that line's been put together, they've done some pretty magical things," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "You look at the [3-2 win against the Toronto Maple Leafs on Monday], it was [Steven Stamkos who] kind of took over the Toronto game and the kid line took over [Wednesday's] game. And when you're getting contributions like that. ... when you start getting that chemistry going, hopefully the wins start to mount a little bit."

Johnson had three assists in the Lightning's fourth straight win. Tampa Bay (24-11-4) is 9-7-3 on the road and 2-3-2 in the past seven road games.

"We actually talked about it before the game," Johnson said. "We put some numbers on the board, our home versus away, we didn't even realize that. As a player you don't really think about that. We realize we had to be better. We've kind of been on a little stretch of playing really good. Coming into tonight's game was huge and we were able to get the win."

Palat assisted on defenseman Matthew Carle's fourth goal with 7:27 left in the first period to open the scoring, and on wing Brett Connolly's seventh goal 5:20 into the third period that made it 3-1.

"I don't know, we were trying to play like we did the last games but we played well and we just did it today and it just went in," Palat said. "It just went in for us."

Tampa Bay forward Nikita Kucherov extended the lead with his 16th goal 8:40 into the third period. He put a rebound off of a shot by Johnson past Enroth to give the Lightning a 4-1 lead. Kucherov's second goal, and 17th of the season, made it 5-1.

"He's an integral part of our team, an integral part of our line. He does a lot," Johnson said. "He's a skilled guy, he competes, he works hard. There's really nothing I can say that he really needs to get better at. He's just an all-around great player, great guy, great teammate. It's fun to watch him play the way he's playing right now."

Kucherov moved within three goals of Stamkos for the Lightning lead.

"You look at that line, [Johnson] and Palat have played together through the minors and through the NHL, so they've kind of been a mainstay together," Cooper said. "But for [Kucherov] to fall in, it was kind of like he was the missing piece that they needed. ... Now with those guys, he sees it, he's got a great stick, he's got a nose for the net and they're kind of that great mix of speed, skill, hockey sense, and they're playing the game the right way and they're being rewarded for it."

Lightning rookie goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy made 10 saves in his fourth start of the season; he allowed a power-play goal to Sabres forward Tyler Ennis with 7:27 left in the first period.

Vasilevskiy was recalled from Syracuse of the American Hockey League on Tuesday.

"Our goals-against have been going down, and ultimately, in the end, you've got to have that defensive side of the game rolling come March and April, especially when your goals have dried up a little bit," Cooper said. "And we got a couple tonight that helped us out but we had to wait until the third to get them and we had to stay in the game until then. It was great that Vasilevskiy was there for us, but our team defense was, in a whole, pretty good."

The Lightning held the Sabres to one shot on goal in the third period.

"I'm not making excuses," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "Sometimes you've got no energy to give. Some of the younger guys we called up, they should be having more energy. They look a little scared sometimes. When you have those two combinations going, it's not very good."

The Sabres (14-21-3) have lost six of their past seven games and have given up five goals or more in five of those games.

"You play the way we played tonight and some of the other nights lately, we don't have a chance," Sabres defenseman Josh Gorges said. "I mean, it's just not the right way to play hockey."

Lightning defenseman Nikita Nesterov was recalled Wednesday and made his NHL debut. He replaced Radko Gudas, who has a lower-body injury.

## **Sabres implode late again, lose to Lightning**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
December 31, 2014

BUFFALO – The stage was set. The Sabres, four days removed from a scintillating third-period rally, fell behind three goals again.

Could the Sabres roar back again Wednesday against the Tampa Bay Lightning? Uh, not quite.

The Sabres couldn't even get the puck on net late in their 5-1 loss inside First Niagara Center.

The Lightning scored three times on 14 shots during the third period. The Sabres, meanwhile, had one shot *the entire period*.

When the Sabres recorded their first shot with 4:41 left in the game, what remained of the capacity crowd of 19,070 fans gave them a Bronx cheer.

It was a far cry from Saturday, when the crowd roared late in a wild 4-3 shootout win against the New York Islanders, the Sabres' ninth home victory in 11 tries.

"We played like a bunch of individuals, trying to beat guys one-on-one, trying to do cute plays," Sabres defenseman Josh Gorges said. "It's a team that is in the top of the conference, it doesn't work. It was evident."

By the end, Sabres goalie Jhonas Enroth's frustration boiled over.

After Nikita Kucherov scored the Lightning's fifth goal, his second of the third period, Enroth whacked his stick across the left post. Following the final horn, Enroth heaved his stick and skated off the ice.

"We really hung him out to dry," Sabres defenseman Mike Weber said.

The Sabres closed out 2014 with a dud, an 11-shot loss.

Coach Ted Nolan tried to bite his lip following the Sabres' sixth setback in the last seven games.

"Sometimes it's better not to say too much," he said.

Nolan believes the rash of injuries and the flu bug that has been making its way through the team has caught up to the Sabres.

"Right now, we're just going through a real tough time," he said. "We got a lot of injuries, lot of guys out of the lineup, a lot of guys not feeling up to par."

He added: "I'm not making excuses. Sometimes you haven't got any energy to give. Some of the younger guys we called up, they should be having a little bit more energy. They looked scared sometimes."

Still, the Sabres had a chance against the Lightning.

Tyler Ennis' power-play goal, his first score in 10 games, tied it 12:33 into the game after the Lightning's Matthew Carle opened the scoring.

But Ondrej Palat's power-play goal put the Lightning up 2-1 with 58 seconds left in the second period. Brett Connolly scored early in the third period before Kucherov's goals.

"You play the way we played tonight and some of the other nights lately, we don't have a chance," Gorges said.  
"I mean, it's just not the right way to play hockey."

The Senators outscored the Sabres 3-0 during the third period in Monday's 5-2 loss in Ottawa.

"We got to find that energy and compete in the third, because we know we're right there for two periods," Ennis said.

## **Mark Pysyk has opportunity to stay with Sabres**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

December 31, 2014

BUFFALO – This time, Mark Pysyk could stay in the NHL for good.

Of course, some thought the Sabres defenseman had secured regular duty last season. The steady 22-year-old was often the only bright spot on a dreadful team, skating 20 minutes some nights.

But 42 games into Pysyk's season, the Sabres sent the prospect back to Rochester. Pysyk possessed the mental skills for the NHL then, Sabres coach Ted Nolan said, but he needed to mature physically. The Sabres wanted Pysyk to get more seasoning in the AHL.

"The maturity level, he's becoming a man," Nolan said Wednesday inside the First Niagara Center. "He doesn't look like a boy anymore. This is a man's league, and you have to make sure you're physically fit. ... So now I think he's ready for primetime."

Pysyk was recalled for two games prior to Christmas and again Sunday. He played in Wednesday's contest against the Tampa Bay Lightning, just his sixth NHL appearance since Jan. 24.

The 2010 first-round pick has paid his dues and perfected his game, Nolan said. He might never go back to the minors.

"Hopefully," Nolan said, "he's here the rest of the year."

**Update:** Pysyk has been sent back to Rochester.

Pysyk averaged 18 minutes, 24 seconds of ice time in his first three games this season. He scored in Monday's 5-2 loss in Ottawa, his third NHL goal.

"It's exciting to be back here," Pysyk said.

The quiet Pysyk, who always seems to be smiling, said he understands why his development has been handled so carefully. After the Sabres sent Pysyk down last winter, many expected he would return following the Olympic break. Instead, he stayed until a two-game recall in April.

The Sabres wanted Pysyk to build confidence, play in all situations, add more offense and showcase more aggressiveness.

"That was the message," he said.

When the Sabres acquired four veteran defensemen during the summer, there was another message: Pysyk would likely start 2014-15 in Rochester. Pysyk's fate was sealed when he injured himself during his first preseason shift.

Still, even as veteran defensemen Andre Benoit and Andrej Meszaros struggled mightily earlier this season, the Sabres kept Pysyk down.

"There's eight D up here," Pysyk said. "Obviously, they're not going to call somebody up when you got eight healthy guys here, so it's just playing my game down there, not really focusing on it. I try to focus on just playing for the Amerks."

Pysyk, who has one goal and 11 points in 30 games with Rochester this season, believes he hasn't outgrown the AHL.

"I don't think so," he said. "Whoever they send there, it's a good league, it's a tough league. It's tough to play every night. It's not easy by any stretch of the imagination. It's a tough league. You got to work hard to be there."

Pysyk's work paid off with a nice promotion.

"This is where you want to be playing hockey," he said.

## **Sabres need to clean up defensively, help goalie Jhonas Enroth**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
January 1, 2015

BUFFALO – Jhonas Enroth, the quiet, mild-mannered Sabres goalie, finally lost his cool Wednesday.

Following Tampa Bay's final goal late in Sabres' 5-1 loss, the diminutive Swede angrily whacked the left post with his stick like he was chopping down a tree. When the final horn ended the Sabres' sixth loss in seven games, Enroth heaved his stick and skated off.

Minutes later, he was visibly upset in the dressing room.

In the Sabres' 5-2 loss Monday in Ottawa, Enroth was irked and appeared to call out two teammates for a blown coverage after the Senators scored early.

The struggling Sabres have been a mess defensively for three weeks, falling apart late and getting blown out of games they had within their grasp. Opponents have scored a whopping 43 goals in the last 10 games (4-5-1 record) entering tonight's tilt against the Florida Panthers inside the First Niagara Center.

The Sabres allowed only 19 goals in their previous 10 tilts. Not surprisingly, they went 7-3.

Teams have beaten Enroth 30 times in his last eight starts, helping his goals-against average balloon up to a ghastly 3.16. His save percentage has dipped to .908.

Sabres coach Ted Nolan understands his starting netminder's frustration. But he wants Enroth to stop acting out on the ice.

"We had a good talk about that," Nolan said Thursday. "We're all frustrated. But one thing about frustration, you have to keep it in control. ... We're all frustrated at certain points, but if you start finger-pointing and blaming, then that's no good, either."

A lineup riddled by injuries and slowed by a flu bug running through the team has repeatedly broken down in front of Enroth.

"It's been frustrating the last couple games," Enroth said. "I obviously don't like giving up goals. I was obviously a little bit mad after the game giving up a couple of goals. But I'm trying to stay positive. I'm trying to get back to that good stretch we had a couple weeks ago. That's how it is. It's gone up and down all year."

Right now, the Sabres are way down because they're hurting themselves. Opponents aren't throttling them like earlier in the year.

"All the games we're in, it's not like they're taking over," Nolan said. "We've been giving it away – bad turnover here, missed assignment here. Those type of things will come back and haunt you, especially with our depleted lineup. We can't afford any kind of mental lapses right now."

Sabres winger Drew Stafford traces the struggles to "what we've been giving teams."

"I don't think we've necessarily been outplayed as much as we're the ones who are turning the pucks over, we're losing coverage, we're playing loose in the neutral zone and our own end," he said. "So that's really what's kind of come back to bite us lately."

It keeps biting them late in contests. The Sabres have recently had several bizarre games in which they played well for the first 40 minutes or so.

– The Sabres trailed Tampa Bay 2-1 entering the third period after the Lightning scored a power-play goal with 58 seconds left in the second period.

– Ottawa took a 3-2 lead Monday with 1:19 remaining in the second period.

– The Sabres had a 3-2 lead in their 6-3 loss Dec. 23 at Detroit before the Red Wings tied it with 2:06 left in the second period.

– The Sabres had a 3-2 lead in their 4-3 overtime loss Dec. 21 at Boston before the Bruins tied it with 1:31 left in regulation.

"We put ourselves in good positions going into the third period or second period and ... that's when we ... got to have that killer instinct," Sabres defenseman Josh Gorges said.

Of course, some of the late collapses could be attributed to the Sabres' weak lineup. Nolan said some players have been so ill they shouldn't have played.

"Banged up, flu, head colds – right now, it's everything," he said Wednesday. "You walk in that locker room, that's all you hear is coughing, sniffing."

He added: "That's not an excuse, that's just fact."

The fact is the Sabres were playing some good hockey before their recent skid.

"That goes to show we have the ability to do it, and for whatever reason, we've gotten away from it the last five, six games," Gorges said. "We got to look back as to what we were doing when we were having success and find those reasons and start playing a lot of those same ways again. It's about keeping things simple."

## **Sabres thumped 5-1 by Lightning**

By Pat Malacaro

WGR 550

December 31, 2014

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Welcome once again inside of the Ted Darling Memorial Press Box, where the Buffalo Sabres will turn the page on 2014 by welcoming the Tampa Bay Lightning to First Niagara Center. It has certainly been an interesting year for the blue and gold, who close it out against one of the best young teams in the NHL.

Jhonas Enroth will be back between the pipes for head coach Ted Nolan and the Sabres. The bench boss also told the media this morning that even though Rasmus Ristolainen is healthier, the defenseman will sit tonight due to conditioning. For more lineup news, click here for Paul Hamilton's pregame primer.

Feel free to chime in using the thread below, while I add my thoughts in between the scoring plays. For more, be sure to give Brian Koziol and myself each a follow on Twitter: @BrianWGR and @PatWGR.

### **First Period**

**12:12 - LIGHTNING GOAL.** I do not think **Jhonas Enroth** saw the shot from the point by **Matthew Carle** that has given Tampa Bay the lead over Buffalo. It has been an even game so far. **1-0 TB.**

**7:27 - SABRES GOAL.** **Tyler Ennis** gets the goal for Buffalo, and this game is back tied, now 1-1. It was a power play goal after some good work on passing in the offensive zone. **1-1 tie.**

**5:55** - Patrick Kaleta is in the penalty box and this is a good chance for Tampa to re-establish themselves after giving all of the play to Buffalo when they had the man advantage.

**2:36** - Sorry, we have been very short with the updates this period with the news that Doug Marrone has opted out of his contract with the Buffalo Bills as head coach. Stunning news out of One Bills Drive.

### ***End of Period***

### **Goal Summary**

**BUF:** 12:33 - Tyler Ennis (9) PPG (Nikita Zadorov, Matt Moulson)

**TB:** 7:48 - Matthew Carle (4) (Ondrej Palat)

### **Penalty Summary**

**BUF:** 13:22 - Patrick Kaleta (2 min., interference)

**TB:** 10:59 - Alex Killorn (2 min., hooking)

### **Shots on Goal**

BUF - 4, TB - 6

### **Second Period**

**15:28** - This period has picked up right where the previous one left off. Not a whole heck of a lot of action going on between the two teams. The puck is going up and down the ice, but no real chances to speak of.

**12:55** - Alex Killorn took his second minor penalty of the night, but this time it does not do any damage. The blue and gold had maybe one chance, but not very much.

10:36 - Buffalo holds the edge in shots on goal this period, 4-1, at the moment, but I am hard pressed to say that they out chancing Tampa Bay this period. The Lightning's only shot on goal may be the best scoring chance of the period.

4:27 - If it not for Josh Gorges' stick check of Steven Stamkos, the superstar could have made the score 2-1 in favor of the visitors. Stamkos had a breakaway chance that was broken up by the rear guard. Very nice play.

**:58.0 - LIGHTNING GOAL.** Ondrej Palat uncorks a very nice wrist shot from the top of the fac-off dot and beats Jhonas Enroth in the top corner. Paul is being critical of Brian Flynn for his defense on the play, and I could not agree more. **2-1 TB.**

### *End of Period*

#### **Goal Summary**

**BUF:** none

**TB:** 19:02 - Ondrej Palat (9) PPG (Tyler Johnson, Nikita Kucherov)

#### **Penalty Summary**

**BUF:** 18:09 - Nicolas Deslauriers (2 min., tripping )

**TB:** 5:03 - Alex Killorn (2 min., tripping)

#### **Shots on Goal**

BUF - 6 (10), TB - 5 (11)

#### **Third Period**

15:13 - Deslauriers has taken another minor penalty tonight, but this time it does not look like it is going to hurt the blue and gold.

**14:40 - LIGHTNING GOAL.** It was not a power play goal, but it might as well have been. Brett Connolly was able to get by the defense and is able to swipe the puck into an open net. Buffalo is not happy. **3-1 TB.**

12:29 - The Sabres have yet to record a shot on goal this period. Tampa has all four so far.

**11:20 - LIGHTNING GOAL.** Weak defense by Tyson Strachan and Nikita Zadorov allows Tampa to jump into the driver's seat midway through this period. Nikita Kucherov puts home the trash, and it is a three-goal lead for the visitors. **4-1 TB.**

**1:55 - LIGHTNING GOAL.** Nikita Kucherov's second of the night has salted this game away. **5-1 TB.**

### *End of Game*

**Tampa Bay 5, Buffalo 1**

#### **Goal Summary**

**BUF:** none

**TB:** 5:20 - Brett Connolly (7) (Anton Stralman, Ondrej Palat). 8:40 - Nikita Kucherov (16) (Tyler Johnson, Anton Stralman). 18:05 - Nikita Kucherov (17) (Tyler Johnson, Andrej Palat)

## **Penalty Summary**

**BUF:** 3:11 - Nicolas Desluariers (2 min., holding)

**TB:** none

## **Shots on Goal**

BUF - 1 (11), TB - 14 (25)

## **Hamilton: Sabres trying to keep the Lightning's stars in check**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

December 31, 2014

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- All I have to do is tell you there were 10 shots total in the first period and you'll have a good flavor of this game.

Both teams are choking this game in the neutral zone which has produced very little action.

Shots from distance have eluded both goaltenders.

Matt Carle got it started from the right point with a slap shot that eluded Jhonas Enroth.

Buffalo got a power play goal when Tyler Ennis' shot from the right point hit Victor Hedman's stick and skipped past AHL goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy.

Enroth made five save while the Russian rookie stopped three.

Steven Stamkos played 6:18 in the first period with just one shot.

Nic Deslauriers was very upset with himself because of a penalty that opened the flood gates in Detroit. He took two penalties in this game and both led to goals.

The first was by Ondrej Palat who was left wide open to the right of Enroth because Brian Flynn was near the goal crease standing next to Tyson Strachan.

The second came nine seconds after Deslauries was released. The Lightning had been putting on pressure and it continued when Brett Connolly scored on a rebound.

Enroth didn't have to deal with a second period breakaway by Stamkos who had gotten behind Mark Pysyk and Josh Gorges. Gorges recovered and knocked it off his stick. The best part was he did it without taking a penalty.

Just 3:20 later, Nikita Zadorov had very poor coverage on Nikita Kucherov and it resulted in the Russian's 16<sup>th</sup> goal of the season.

Stamkos didn't hurt the Sabres in this game, but players like Tyler Johnson and Palat did. With his two assists, Johnson passed Stamkos in scoring with 39 points.

I was talking earlier about chocking this game off. With 5:52 left in the third the third period shots were 12-0 Tampa Bay.

The first came at 15:19 and got a huge cheer from the fans.

Sorry I don't have better news for the Sabres fans, but I will say everybody stay safe and Happy New Year.

## **Sabres, Kaleida provide sleep sacks to babies**

By Emily Lenihan

WIVB

January 1, 2015

**BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB)** - The Buffalo Sabres are working with Kaleida Health to find a safe alternative to baby blankets that can be dangerous for newborns.

Recently, moms are ditching cribs full of blankets for sleep sacks to get the perfect swaddle that will leave their baby not only feeling cozy, but safe from the dangers of suffocation.

One popular brand is the Halo sleep sack, they've teamed up with the Sabres.

Many babies born at Women and Children's Hospital and Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital will each receive a sleep sack. It's expected they'll be handed out to over 5,000 babies in 2015.

At Women and Children's hospital, baby Alaya Skye was born shortly at 8:16 a.m. Thursday.

Alaya's father Cory Bishop said, "I actually wanted her to wait because we did a little partying last night, but I guess she wanted to party too."

Jessica Hibbard's son was born last Monday. She said, "Ari actually got his a little bit early, someone snuck one to Daddy the other day and he loves it. He is very content in it. He loves to be snuggled in and swaddled."

The first New Year's baby was born to Jeff and Elizabeth Walkowicz. Their little girl arrived at 4:15 a.m. at Mercy Hospital.

## **Lightning end 2014 with win in Buffalo**

By Mark Ludwiczak  
The Sports Xchange  
December 31, 2014

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- The Tampa Bay Lightning ended 2014 on a high note, and they hope their previous struggles on the road will stay in the past.

The Lightning (24-11-4) dominated the Buffalo Sabres on their way to a 5-1 victory Wednesday night thanks to a top performance from their second line, featuring center Tyler Johnson, left winger Ondrej Palat and right winger Nikita Kucherov.

"The game didn't have much life for the first 30 minutes and that line came to life," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "That's all it took was one group to come to life and it was them. It was just a weird game. It was like nobody wanted to take control of the game and that line did, and we came out on top."

Palat (one goal, three assists) was named the game's first star for his four-point night. Kucherov (two goals, one assist) and Johnson (three assists) certainly made their mark as well. The line showcased its speed and skill and was too much for the struggling Sabres.

"Since that line's been put together they've done some pretty magical things," Cooper said. "The kid line took over tonight's game. And when you're getting contributions like that ... when you start getting that chemistry going, hopefully the wins start to mount a little bit."

Defenseman Matthew Carle and right winger Brett Connolly also scored for the Lightning. Goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy made 10 saves.

Tampa Bay hopes the road victory sparks a turnaround away from home. The Lightning have been far better at home (15-4-1) than on the road (9-7-3) this year and improving their road performances was a point of emphasis leading up to the game.

"It's huge," Johnson said. "We actually talked about it before the game. We put some numbers on the board, our home versus away, we didn't even realize that. As a player you don't really think about that. We realize we had to be better."

Added Cooper: "If you want to do anything you've got to learn how to win on the road and if you're fortunate enough to make the playoffs, you have to win on the road. Our last couple trips we haven't won the first game on the road and we've kind of slipped from there so hopefully this will be a boost."

Center Tyler Ennis scored the lone goal for the Sabres (14-21-3), who lost for the sixth time in seven games. Goalie Jhonas Enroth made 20 saves for Buffalo.

"Right now we're going through a real tough time," Sabres head coach Ted Nolan said. "We've got a lot of injuries, a lot of guys out of our lineup, a lot of guys not feeling up to par. It's the same thing here tonight." The Lightning used their speed and skill to frustrate the Sabres.

Carle opened the scoring 7:48 into the first period. After a nice setup by Palat, who circled to his left before finding Carle to his right, the defenseman put a slap shot past Enroth for his fourth goal of the season.

Ennis evened the score five minutes later with a slap shot from the left point. His shot deflected off Lightning defenseman Victor Hedman's stick and into the net for Ennis' ninth goal of the year.

With Sabres left winger Nicolas Deslauriers in the penalty box for tripping, Palat gave Tampa Bay a 2-1 lead with one minute remaining in the second period. Following a cross-ice pass from center Tyler Johnson, a wide-open Palat ripped a wrist shot high to the blocker side for his ninth goal of the season.

Connolly made it 3-1 just over five minutes into the third period. Seconds after another penalty on Deslauriers expired, Connolly inadvertently blocked a shot from defenseman Anton Stralman in front of the Buffalo net. However, the puck eventually found its way back to Connolly, and he put it home for his seventh goal of the season.

Kucherov made it 4-1 on a tap-in 8:40 into the third. After a shot from Johnson from the far right circle was stopped, the rebound fell softly to Kucherov near the crease.

Kucherov added his 17th of the season with just under two minutes remaining following a cross-ice feed from Palat.

NOTES: The Sabres scratched RW Brian Gionta (upper body), D Rasmus Ristolainen (illness) and D Andre Benoit (healthy). ... The Lightning scratched D Radko Gudas, RW J.T. Brown and G Ben Bishop. ... This was the third of five games between the two teams this season. The Sabres won 2-1 in a shootout at Buffalo on Dec. 2. The Lightning won 5-0 two days later in Tampa. The next meeting takes place Jan. 9 in Tampa.

## **Sabres look to continue winning ways on home ice**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

December 31, 2014

The Sabres are 9-2-0 in their past 11 home games and will try to keep that momentum going in their final game of the calendar year.

Buffalo takes on the Tampa Bay Lightning at 6 p.m. from First Niagara Center. The Tops Gamenight pregame show begins at 5:30 p.m. on MSG-B and Bell. The game can also be heard live on WGR 550.

In their last home game, the Sabres rallied back from a 3-0 deficit to win 4-3 in the shootout. Forward Drew Stafford said having a loud crowd support them helped in their comeback effort.

"Hopefully we have a good start to the night tonight for our fans. We've had a good thing going here at home for a while," he said after the team's optional morning skate. "We're just trying to ride that wave as long as we can, use some of that momentum from that comeback that we had the other night. We know when the fans are engaged, it obviously gets us going a little bit more."

Before this current stretch, Buffalo had not won nine of 11 home games since Jan. 17 to March 7, 2007.

"We're just excited to play in front of our crowd. They've been awesome, especially recently," forward Brian Flynn said. "That game against the Islanders gave us a lot of momentum when we got that first goal; the crowd was really into it so it's been a fun atmosphere."

Coming into town is a Lightning squad that is on a three-game winning streak and has scored the second-most goals in the League. They're tied with Montreal for first place in the Eastern Conference.

Captain Steven Stamkos is their leading scorer with 38 points in 38 games (20+18), but right behind him are Tyler Johnson (13+24) and Nikita Kucherov (15+19).

"Just looking at their roster, you can see this is a really skilled and fast team," Sabres center Mikhail Grigorenko said. "We just need to be physical against them. If we play a fast game and be patient in the D zone, I think we have a chance."

---

### **BLUE LINE CHANGES**

Defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen will remain out with the flu, but Tyson Strachan will be back for the defensive corps.

Mark Pysyk will remain in the lineup and Andre Benoit will be a healthy scratch.

While Pysyk started the season in Buffalo, he ended up splitting the season in the NHL and in the American Hockey League. After sustaining an injury on his first shift of the preseason, he was sent to the Rochester Americans once he healed up and has played only three NHL games so far this season.

Pysyk has been paired with Nikita Zadorov and his steady play has been a bright spot in the eyes of Sabres coach Ted Nolan.

"His mental capacity to play in this league was there already. So now, I think he's ready for primetime and we'll see what happens," Nolan said. "Pysyk's paid his dues and he worked on his game, perfected his game. Hopefully he's here for the rest of the year."

Noland said that Ristolainen will likely be back in Friday against the Florida Panthers. Tyler Myers, who will miss his fifth consecutive game with a lower-body injury skated during practice on Tuesday, but Nolan said he wasn't feeling too well after that and will skate again Thursday.

Jhonas Enroth will start in goal. He's 10-4-1 in his past 15 games.

---

### **IT'S A CELEBRATION**

The game also marks the return of Tux and Pucks, so many fans in attendance will be dressed to the nines as they prepare for New Year's Eve festivities.

Fans who are looking to get gussied up in their New Year's Eve best can take advantage of a special offer from the game's presenting sponsor, Tuxedo Junction. Simply bring your game ticket to any Tuxedo Junction to receive a complete tuxedo rental for \$20.15. The offer will run up through game time.

Four 50/50 raffle drawings will also be held during the game. The grand prize drawing will have a guaranteed minimum pot of \$20,015, with the three other drawings having a guaranteed prize amount of \$2,015.

---

### **PROJECTED LINEUP**

26 Matt Moulson – 28 Zemgus Girgensons – 63 Tyler Ennis  
44 Nicolas Deslauriers – 65 Brian Flynn – 21 Drew Stafford  
19 Cody Hodgson – 25 Mikhail Grigorenko – 80 Chris Stewart  
22 Johan Larsson – 8 Cody McCormick – 36 Patrick Kaleta

4 Josh Gorges – 24 Tyson Strachan  
6 Mike Weber – 41 Andrej Meszaros  
51 Nikita Zadorov – 3 Mark Pysyk

1 Jhonas Enroth  
34 Michal Neuvirth

Scratched: 12 Brian Gionta (injured, upper body), 55 Rasmus Ristolainen (flu), 61 Andre Benoit  
Injured Reserve: 17 Torrey Mitchell (lower body), 57 Tyler Myers (lower body), 82 Marcus Foligno (hand)

## **Sabres run out of steam in 3rd against Lightning to close out calendar year**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

December 31, 2014

The Buffalo Sabres have been fighting the flu and injuries to key contributors over the past week or so and the results on the ice have been indicative of those struggles.

Buffalo entered the third period of their game against the Tampa Bay Lightning on Wednesday down a goal. However, the Lightning scored three in the third while the Sabres were only able to register one shot on goal in the final period.

Ondrej Palat had a four-point night for Tampa Bay as they defeated the Sabres 5-1 at First Niagara Center on New Year's Eve. Tyler Ennis scored Buffalo's lone goal.

The Lightning outshot Buffalo 25-11 in the game. Jhonas Enroth made 20 saves for Buffalo while Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 10 Sabres shots.

Buffalo entered the game 9-2-0 in their past 11 games on home ice. However in their past seven games overall, they've been outscored 33-15 and are 1-5-1 in that stretch. Whether injuries were a factor or not, Sabres alternate captain Josh Gorges believes that the success they've had was the result of a work ethic they haven't shown in recent games.

"That just goes to show when you are doing the right things and playing the right way, you give yourself a chance to win. And you're not going to win every night even if you play a good game, but you give yourself a chance," Gorges said. "You play the way we played tonight and some of the other nights lately, you don't have a chance. It's just not the right way to play hockey."

Sabres forward Cody McCormick thought the team could've countered the Lightning's attack with more zone time and harder work in the corners and in front of the net.

"They're a fast team. They were backchecking on us pretty hard and I think we could've gotten to the hard areas a little more tonight," he said.

---

### **EARLY GOALS**

Tampa Bay opened the scoring 7:48 into the game when Matt Carle one-timed a pass from Ondrej Palat past Enroth.

Buffalo's power play came to life to tie the game. Ennis' shot from above the right faceoff dot deflected off the stick of Lightning defenseman Victor Hedman and in past goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy.

Buffalo's power play had been cold the past few games. They hadn't scored with the man advantage in four games.

---

### **BACK BREAKERS**

Palat scored with 58.0 seconds left on a Lightning power play to take a 2-1 lead. His high wrist shot beat Enroth on the Lightning's 11th shot of the game.

The Lightning increased their lead with Brett Connolly's goal 5:20 into the third period.

"That second goal hurt us a little bit but that third goal really broke our back and we just didn't have enough energy," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said, who noted that the locker room has been filled with players who are coughing and sniffing, trying to grind their way through the game. "We just have to hopefully get better, get healed and get back on track."

Sabres defenseman Mike Weber also thought Connolly's goal played a huge role in deflating the team's spirits. The Lightning controlled the play in the third period, resulting in Buffalo putting just one shot on net in the third.

"I think the early one took the wind out of our sails there. We just never recovered. It just seemed like they were getting some good bounces off some wide shots, rebounds that we weren't picking up guys in front," he said.

"That's on the defensive corps. We didn't do a very good job of clearing out guys on the back door for Jhonas. He's been playing great for us as of late and we really hung him out to dry."

---

### **HOT LINE**

Then the line of Palat, Tyler Johnson and Nikita Kucherov struck again when Kucherov tallied 3:20 later. Then with 1:55 remaining in regulation, Kucherov scored again to make it 5-1.

Kucherov finished with a two goals and an assist and Johnson recorded three helpers to help the winning cause. The Lightning have now won four games in a row and

"We knew what we had in front of us coming into this. I think we got out-worked and that's not something we want to creep into our game," McCormick said. "It is one game. We want to clean that up and we've got a big road trip coming up so we better get it dialed in here."

---

### **COMING UP**

The Sabres are back at it Friday night at First Niagara Center against the Florida Panthers at 7 p.m. for their first game of 2015.

They'll then leave right after the game for a four-game road trip on which they'll face the New York Rangers, New Jersey Devils, Carolina Hurricanes and the Lightning once again.

## **Sabres open 2015 with new lines**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

January 1, 2015

The Buffalo Sabres opened the 2015 calendar year with an afternoon practice at First Niagara Center.

Defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen skated with the team again as he recovers from the flu. He was reunited at practice on a pairing with Nikita Zadorov and Ristolainen was back at the point with the first power-play unit.

Ristolainen left early in the second period of the team's game on Dec. 27 and has missed the past two contests.

"We certainly missed him for the last little bit so we're looking forward to, knock on wood, if everything goes good, he'll be in the lineup tomorrow," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said, knocking on the podium he was situated in front of.

The Sabres are set to take on the Florida Panthers at home Friday night at 7 p.m. before embarking on a four-game road trip that starts Saturday night against the New York Rangers. Buffalo will play five games in eight nights.

With Ristolainen about ready to return, the Sabres sent Mark Pysyk back to the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League.

Tyler Myers will likely rejoin the team at some point on the road trip. He's missed five games with a lower-body injury.

---

### **SAME FACES, NEW LINES**

After a disappointing loss to the Tampa Bay Lightning on Wednesday in which the team recorded only one shot on goal in the third period, the coaching staff changed up some line combinations at practice on Thursday.

Brian Flynn moved back to the wing and skated with center Mikhail Grigorenko and right wing Chris Stewart. Center Cody McCormick moved up between Cody Hodgson and Drew Stafford and Johan Larsson was back in the middle, centering a line featuring Nicolas Deslauriers and Patrick Kaleta.

The team has been battling sickness and injuries that have forced some of the changes. With Torrey Mitchell, Brian Gionta and Marcus Foligno hurt, the team has had trouble finding scoring outside of the top line of Zemgus Girgensons, Matt Moulson and Tyler Ennis.

We changed up a couple line combinations just to shake it up a little bit. Hopefully by shaking it up, we get a different result," Nolan said. "Everything's a little bit out of whack, but by switching it up here today, hopefully, we'll settle the waters down here a little bit and get back to the way we were [playing]."

---

### **A MOMENT OF FRUSTRATION**

Jhonas Enroth started Wednesday night against the Tampa Bay Lightning and wasn't happy with his performance. He allowed five goals on 25 shots, including three in the third period.

His frustration came to a boil at the end of the game when he snapped his stick in half against the goal post and heaved it into the corner as time expired.

"I wasn't happy with giving up five goals and I'd given up four goals the night before that," Enroth said after practice Thursday. "It's been a little bit frustrating the last couple games giving up a couple goals here. It was definitely not a good run."

Buffalo is 1-5-1 over the past seven games and has been outscored 33-15 over that span. Nolan would like to see the team keep a calmer demeanor as they work their way through this tough stretch and he spoke with Enroth about his outburst.

"We had a good talk about that. We're all frustrated, but one thing about frustration, you have to keep it in control," Nolan said. "Once you lose control – we're all frustrated at certain points, but if you start finger pointing and blaming, that's no good either. I understand the frustration but you have to make sure you stay focused on what your responsibility is."

---

### **THURSDAY'S PRACTICE**

26 Matt Moulson – 28 Zemgus Girgensons – 63 Tyler Ennis  
65 Brian Flynn – 25 Mikhail Grigorenko – 80 Chris Stewart  
19 Cody Hodgson – 8 Cody McCormick – 21 Drew Stafford  
44 Nicolas Deslauriers – 22 Johan Larsson – 36 Patrick Kaleta

4 Josh Gorges – 24 Tyson Strachan  
51 Nikita Zadorov – 55 Rasmus Ristolainen  
61 Andre Benoit – 41 Andrej Meszaros

1 Jhonas Enroth  
34 Michal Neuvirth

Did Not Practice: 6 Mike Weber (maintenance day), 12 Brian Gionta (injured reserve, upper body), 17 Torrey Mitchell (injured reserve, lower body), 57 Tyler Myers (injured reserve, lower body), 82 Marcus Foligno (injured reserve, hand)

### **POWER PLAY**

#### *First Unit*

Moulson-Girgensons-Ennis  
Stafford-Ristolainen

#### *Second Unit*

Hodgson-Grigorenko/Flynn-Stewart  
Zadorov-Meszaros

## **World Junior Championship recap: Dec. 31**

By Kris Baker

Sabres.com

January 1, 2015

**Sam Reinhart** (2014, first round) scored the game-winning goal and added two assists Wednesday as Canada prevailed 5-3 over the United States in the marquee preliminary round matchup of the 2015 IIHF World Junior Championship. With eight points (3+5) in four games, Reinhart enters the quarterfinals as the tournament's leading scorer.

**Hudson Fasching** notched one assist and a plus-two rating for the U.S., while fellow Sabres prospect **J.T. Compher** (2013, second round) continues to look for his first point of the tournament, finishing with one shot on goal and a minus-one rating in the loss.

Reinhart was in command all game long, winning 18 of his 23 face-offs and recording six shots on goal while centering Canada's top line with explosive wingers Anthony Duclair (NYR) and Max Domi (ARI). The unit's speed and puck skills created regular pressure around the American net, and their work nearly paid off on their second shift of the night when Reinhart grabbed a rebound off the end boards and tried to jam it past Thatcher Demko (VAN), who got a leg out in time to make the stop.

After a scoreless first period, Reinhart earned his first point of the night at 7:07 of the middle frame when he hit Domi with a pass out of the zone and then followed up to chip the rebound back to him for the primary assist as Canada took the 1-0 lead.

With Canada ahead 3-1 late in the third period, the Americans came back to life thanks to line of Fasching, Dylan Larkin (DET) and Sonny Milano (CBJ). Milano disrupted a Canadian clearing attempt to tip the puck to Fasching, who stickhandled through the slot before sliding a nice pass to Larkin at the left post for the easy goal with 2:34 to play.

With the U.S. net empty in the final minute, Reinhart pressured Anthony DeAngelo (TBL) into a turnover and potted the puck for what turned out to be the game-winner with 55 seconds left in regulation.

The Americans keep grinding with another Larkin marker 13 seconds later, but Reinhart would cap the three-point effort with a nice board pass to spring Domi for Canada's second empty-netter with just four seconds remaining to close out the victory.

Fasching maintained his role for Team USA as a productive power forward at both ends of the rink, adding two shots on goal to his assist. Through four games, the University of Minnesota sophomore has three points (1+2) while sharing the team lead with a plus-seven rating.

Compher got off to a good start with motoring feet at both ends of the ice to keep the puck deep and apply heat with a pesky backcheck, but his line was unable to generate momentum like they had in USA's previous while being matched up against the talented trio of Curtis Lazar (OTT), Nick Ritchie (ANA) and 2015 draft prospect Connor McDavid. Compher has contributed nine shots on goal to the American attack thus far in the tournament.

Domi paced the Canadians with a pair of goals to earn Player of the Game honors. Lazar and Josh Morrissey (WPG) also scored for Canada. DeAngelo struck for the Americans on the power play in the second period before Larkin added his late pair of goals to round out the scoring. Demko finished with 40 saves to earn Player of the Game honors for the U.S.

One of the game's subplots featured the top two prospects eligible for the 2015 NHL draft – Canada's McDavid and USA's Jack Eichel. Each notched one assist on Wednesday, with McDavid breaking down the left side with power to create Lazar's tally to give Canada the 3-1 lead. Eichel making a nice pass on the power play to earn a secondary helper on the first American goal.

Canada completed the round robin with four regulation victories to earn first place in Group A. They'll next take on surprising Denmark in a quarterfinal matchup on Friday in Toronto (8 p.m., NHL Network/TSN).

The United States will remain in Montreal to face Russia on Friday (1 p.m., NHL Network/TSN) in a rematch of last year's quarterfinal that ended the Americans hope for a medal.

---

**Victor Olofsson** (2014, seventh round) was unable to get on the score sheet as Sweden capped off an undefeated preliminary round with a 5-1 victory over Switzerland.

After the teams traded early goals, Olofsson hopped over the boards for his first shift and used his speed to provide pesky backpressure to help contain the Swiss attack. Minutes later, came down the left wing and got off a clean wrister for the first of his two shots on goal in the contest as the Swedes settled into their groove.

Olofsson continued to make the most of his limited minutes the rest of the way, highlighted by a nice centering pass from the boards in the middle frame and astute point coverage for nearly an entire shift as defenseman William Lagesson (EDM) got caught up after following the play deep into the offensive zone.

Olofsson has yet to register a point in the tournament, logging four shots on goal and a plus-one rating.

Sweden will take on Finland (3 p.m.) in quarterfinal action on Friday in a rematch of last year's gold medal contest. The other quarterfinal matchup sees Slovakia take on the Czech Republic in Montreal (5 p.m.).