



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Flynn helps Sabres beat Flyers 3-2 in shootout

By Aaron Bracy

Associated Press

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PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The NHL's worst team is quite good when the game goes to a shootout.

Brian Flynn scored the clinching goal in the tiebreaker, leading the Buffalo Sabres to a 3-2 victory over the Philadelphia Flyers on Thursday night.

Nicolas Deslauriers and Brian Gionta scored in regulation for Buffalo, which won for just the fourth time in the last 27 games. The Sabres improved to 7-2 in shootouts.

"We have some pretty good little shooters on our team," Buffalo coach Ted Nolan said. "We're not afraid to go into the shootouts, for sure."

Jakub Voracek and Ryan White scored for Philadelphia, which fell to 2-7 in the tiebreaker.

The Flyers carried a nine-game point streak into the opener of a four-game homestand on Tuesday against Columbus, but absorbed a disappointing loss to the Blue Jackets before earning a single point against the lowly Sabres, hurting their already slim playoff chances. Philadelphia began the day seven points behind Boston for the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

Coach Craig Berube was asked afterward if losing at home to the Sabres, who have an NHL-low 38 points, was "unacceptable."

"Unacceptable? I think our team competed," he said. "Anybody can lose to anybody in this league."

The Flyers' struggles in shootouts continued against Buffalo.

After Voracek tallied on Philadelphia's first shootout attempt, Claude Giroux, Wayne Simmonds and Sean Couturier came up empty. Ray Emery stopped Zemgus Girgensons and Tyler Ennis after Gionta scored in the tiebreaker. But Flynn deked past Emery to win it for Buffalo.

"I just tried to give a little bit of a fake, pull it to the backhand hard and fortunately he bit," Flynn said.

It was the sixth consecutive one-goal game for Buffalo, which had lost four straight.

"Over the last number of games I thought our effort has been there," Nolan said. "All one-goal games and to come on the better side of it is a good feeling."

Gionta gave Buffalo a 2-1 lead by scoring on a rebound just 38 seconds into the second period. It was the 500th career point for Gionta, making him the 49th American to reach the milestone.

"To see the way he leads and way he prepares himself and to see him get that goal tonight was nice to watch," Nolan said.

Voracek broke out of a goal-scoring slump with 11:15 left in the second, tying it at 2 with a power-play tally. Simmonds' shot from in close rebounded to Voracek, who fired it over Michal Neuvirth's glove.

Voracek had just one goal in his last 14 games, and it was an empty-netter. It was his first score against a goalie since Jan. 12.

The assist gave Simmonds a six-game point streak (four goals, four assists), tying a career high.

Buffalo had a goal disallowed with just over five minutes left in the third period when Girgensons shoveled the puck into the net with his hand.

Deslauriers opened the scoring 4:41 into the first. Flynn sent a pass to front of the net and Deslauriers partially fanned on the shot, but he got enough of it to get it past Emery, who couldn't corral the bouncing puck.

Philadelphia tied it 2 1/2 minutes later when White netted his first goal in his 10th game this season. Braydon Coburn took the initial shot and White hustled to the far post after Coburn's shot bounced off the boards and out in front of the crease, beating Neuvirth with a quick shot from right in front.

Neuvirth made 36 saves.

"For a young goaltender trying to establish himself as a No. 1, the difference makers, that's what you have to be," Nolan said. "And he was a difference maker tonight."

NOTES: The Flyers inducted former defenseman Eric Desjardins into the club's Hall of Fame in a pregame ceremony. ... Giroux's scoring drought reached 10 games. ... Buffalo snapped a five-game losing streak in Philadelphia, winning in the Flyers' building for the first time since March 5, 2011.

Rangers-Sabres preview

Associated Press

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The New York Rangers have used Cam Talbot exclusively since Henrik Lundqvist was injured, but that may be about to change.

The Rangers could start MacKenzie Skapski in his NHL debut Friday night as they look to make it six consecutive wins against the league-worst Buffalo Sabres.

New York (34-16-6) is 5-1-2 since Lundqvist was put on injured reserve with a neck injury, and Talbot has started all of those games compiling a 3.10 goals-against average.

After a strong performance in a 5-1 win at Arizona on Saturday, Talbot hasn't been nearly as sharp in the last two contests. He made 38 saves in a 6-5 road win over the New York Islanders on Monday after allowing a goal 11 seconds into the game, and stopped 24 shots in Thursday's 5-4 shootout loss to Vancouver.

"Any time you score four goals you want to win the game," Talbot said. "Obviously you never want to give up chances like that and goals like that. Four goals should be enough most nights, and that's on me."

That may also be enough for coach Alain Vigneault, who has yet to declare Friday's starter with his team playing on back-to-back nights for the first time since losing Lundqvist. This visit to Buffalo is the makeup from a Nov. 21 postponement due to a snowstorm.

Vigneault could turn to Skapski - a sixth-round pick in 2013 - who went 12-7-3 with a 2.38 GAA in 24 games with Hartford of the AHL before being called up earlier this month.

Offense hasn't been a problem lately for New York, which has totaled 26 goals during its 4-0-1 run. Rick Nash has been at the forefront of that production, tallying eight goals and five assists in 10 games. The All-Star left wing is second in the league with 36 goals, his highest total since netting 40 with Columbus in 2008-09.

Nash seems poised for another big offensive display since he has 11 goals and four assists in his last 13 meetings with the Sabres (17-37-4). He has a goal in four straight matchups, scoring on the power play and adding an assist in a 6-1 home victory Jan. 3.

The Rangers netted the first five goals in that game, beating Buffalo for the ninth time in 11 tries. They've outscored the Sabres 21-7 during five consecutive wins in the series.

Buffalo has lost nine of 10 at home, but is coming off Thursday's 3-2 shootout win at Philadelphia.

The Sabres improved to 2-3-1 over a stretch of six consecutive one-goal games.

"Over the last number of games I thought our effort has been there," coach Ted Nolan said. "All one-goal games and to come on the better side of it is a good feeling."

A better feeling would be winning back-to-back games for the first time since a season-high four-game streak from Dec. 9-15.

Michael Neuvirth has been sharp in the last two games, stopping 70 of 73 shots, and ended a personal 11-game losing streak Thursday. Neuvirth, though, has lost four straight starts against the Rangers behind an unsightly 5.95 GAA.

Anders Lindback has yet to make his Sabres debut after he was acquired from Dallas on Feb. 11.

Tyler Ennis is one of the few Sabres to have success against New York, collecting eight points in the past eight meetings. He scored in Buffalo's 3-1 home loss on Dec. 5, 2013.

Sabres start strong, finish off Flyers

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

February 19, 2015

PHILADELPHIA – The Buffalo Sabres have been slightly addicted to drama lately. The close-game kind of drama.

Thursday night was the sixth straight one-goal game for the Sabres and the second straight shootout.

This time, the Sabres took the extra point as Brian Flynn scored in the shootout to give the Sabres a 3-2 win over the Philadelphia Flyers at Wells Fargo Center.

While the Sabres twice took the lead only to lose it, the energy and offense they generated in the first five minutes of the game set the tone for the team's first win in five games.

"One thing we came into the game trying to focus on was our start," Sabres captain Brian Gionta said. "We have kind of waited until the second half of the first or into the second to get our game going and to get it going early was a big key for us, a big confidence booster, too."

It started with a knuckleball type of goal. Flynn bounced a pass to Nicolas Deslauriers in front of the Flyers' net. Deslauriers got his stick on the bouncing puck, which knuckled past Ray Emery at 4:41 of the first.

It was Deslauriers' fifth goal of the season and first in 22 games.

The Sabres were outshooting the Flyers, 5-2, for one of their best starts to a game in weeks.

"That's one thing we talked to the team about, we needed a good start," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "Sure needed to figure that out, too. The guys had a good start, and it was a good win."

Of course the win didn't come easily. The Flyers tied the game at 7:23 of the first when Braydon Coburn's shot went wide and bounced off the end boards to Ryan White. Alone in front of Michal Neuvirth, White buried his opportunity. It was White's first goal as a Flyer. The center was signed as a free agent by the Flyers in the summer but missed the first three months of the season with a torn pectoral from offseason training.

The Sabres came out blazing to start the second. On the first shift of the period, Torrey Mitchell fired a shot on Emery. He made the save but gave up a huge rebound. Emery was moving to his right with Gionta streaking to the net. The rebound came to Gionta's stick and he had an open net to Emery's left, easily finishing the play for a 2-1 lead.

It was a milestone goal for two players. For Gionta it was his 500th career point. He became the 62nd active NHL player and the 49th American-born player in NHL history to reach that mark.

With the primary assist, Mitchell recorded his 100th point.

"It's more about trying to get things on the right track here, making sure we're going the right way," Gionta said. "Those things are nice, but at the end of the day wins are way better."

The Flyers took advantage of their own fortuitous bounce on the power play. Neuvirth had made a clutch save on Wayne Simmonds, but the puck went to an open Jakub Voracek, who scored his 19th of the year.

Buffalo came charging back and Chris Stewart sprung out at center ice for what felt like his nightly breakaway chance. Emery made the save. Tyler Ennis came hard after the rebound and was tripped up by the Flyers'

defense. He flew straight into the net, taking out Emery. Ennis ended up with a goaltender interference penalty on the play, much to the Sabres' disbelief.

Voracek hit the post on the ensuing power play, but Neuvirth covered the puck and the score remained tied.

Neuvirth continued to come up big, finishing with 36 saves.

In Tuesday's shootout in New Jersey, he gave up two goals to take the loss. Voracek was the first shooter for the Flyers and beat Neuvirth. Gionta scored to even the shootout and then Neuvirth closed the door.

"For a young goaltender trying to establish himself as No. 1 ... the difference-maker is what you've got to be and he was a difference-maker," Nolan said.

Tied after three shooters, Flynn beat Emery in the sudden death shootout to give the Sabres the win.

"The goalie seemed like he was pretty aggressive on some of our shooters, so I thought one quick fake and fortunately it worked," Flynn said. "It was nice to get one for Neuvy. He's been playing awesome for us. He made some big saves, especially late in the game to get us to the shootout."

Sabres notebook: Weber plays elder role for youngsters

By Amy Moritz

Buffalo News

February 19, 2015

PHILADELPHIA – He's not too sure what to make of his current status. With Drew Stafford traded and Patrick Kaleta on injured reserve, Mike Weber is the longest tenured Buffalo Sabre in the team's lineup.

"It's a weird feeling to be the last one," Weber said with a slight laugh after the team had a pregame skate in Wells Fargo Center before meeting the Philadelphia Flyers. Buffalo won Thursday night's game, 3-2, in a shootout.

"It's been discussed as not a joke but it's kind of a funny talking point at this point. I've seen a lot of people come and go over my tenure here. That part is what it is. I guess I'm just getting old."

The 27-year old defenseman grew up professionally in the Sabres organization.

A second-round draft choice by the Sabres in 2006, he played one more season of junior hockey before signing his pro deal. He made his NHL debut in the 2007-08 season, spending most of the year in Rochester. By 2010 he was a full-time Sabre. That was the last season the Sabres made the playoffs.

"This organization has given me a lot," Weber said. "I'm very grateful for everything they've done for me. It wasn't always an easy battle here but I've worked hard to hopefully represent the crest as well as I can and do my part to help this organization achieve its ultimate goal. It hasn't been going the best the last two or three years but I really do want to be part of the solution. If I can bring any knowledge from the years and years I've been here, I will."

In Tuesday's shootout loss at New Jersey, Weber logged 24:19 of ice time – his highest total since he had a career high 26:58 on Jan. 14, 2012, against the New York Islanders.

His approach to the game is hard-working and emotional, something that others in the room can't help but notice.

"He's a heart-and-soul kind of guy," Sabres captain Brian Gionta said. "He's out there doing what he can for the team, blocking shots, playing hard minutes. He's the type of player in the trenches all the time and that's the type of guy we need."

His style of play, his experience and his leadership earned him an alternate captain position when veteran defenseman Josh Gorges went on injured reserve last week with a lower body injury.

The letter is an honor, he says, but it doesn't change the way he plays.

"I wouldn't take it as a slap in the face if I didn't get it or anything like that," Weber said. "It's a huge honor to wear it but again I'm playing the same way if I have it on or not."

The letter on his sweater doesn't change anything, but it does bring a subtle sense of validation to the way Weber plays.

"I think for him it certifies what he does for the team and how he goes about his daily business," Gionta said.

And the way he goes about his business is exactly what the coaching staff wants the younger players to see.

It's an emerging theme for a team that seems destined to finish last in the NHL – utilize your veterans to make the younger players better.

Weber and his wife have a 16-month-old son, Emerson, and family life has put a new perspective on the way he makes his livelihood. He's learned the value of an NHL career and the dangerous pull of complacency. That's what he wants the younger guys in the room to understand.

"It's not an easy league. It's hard to stay here. It can be taken away from you at any moment. I think that's the biggest thing I can try to stress," Weber said. "This is not something you should take for granted at any point no matter how good or bad the team's doing. You're always trying to survive and provide.

"We've got a lot of young guys here so they don't understand the fact of family and kids and things like that but this is how I provide for family and I'll do anything to stay here as long as I can and to help my team win," Weber said.

"You can't have that complacency. I feel like that snuck in a little bit here but we're trying hard to work that out. This is the best league in the world. It's not easy to get here. It's not easy to stay here. The guys who do stay in the league for a long time are the guys who understand that every night they've got to find a way to bring something. That's the best advice I can give."

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Thursday's start was pushed back to 8 p.m. to accommodate a pregame ceremony as Eric Desjardins was inducted into the Flyers' Hall of Fame.

Desjardins ranks second among defensemen in Flyers' franchise history with 396 points (93 goals, 303 assists) in 738 games.

Eric Lindros and John LeClair were inducted to the team's hall earlier this season.

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The November snowstorm caused two Sabres games to be rescheduled. Here's a reminder to sort out Friday's ticket confusion.

Fans with tickets for the game versus the Rangers originally scheduled for Nov. 21 may use those tickets for Friday's game.

If you have tickets for the Feb. 20 game against the Ottawa Senators, the game originally scheduled for this date, you missed it. Those tickets are not valid for Friday night's game. They were only valid for the game against the Senators on Dec. 15.

Neuvirth's 36 saves help Sabres top Flyers in shootout

By Adam Kimelman

NHL.com

February 19, 2015

PHILADELPHIA -- The Buffalo Sabres had played five straight one-goal games before facing the Philadelphia Flyers on Thursday. Having lost four of them, captain Brian Gionta said he believed it was just a matter of time before the puck started bouncing the Sabres' way.

Buffalo got all the bounces it needed, including one courtesy of Gionta, in a 3-2 shootout win against Philadelphia at Wells Fargo Center.

Brian Flynn scored in the fourth round of the shootout to clinch the victory. The Sabres (17-37-4) improved to 7-2 in shootouts this season.

Flynn skated down the middle of the ice, faked a forehand shot, dragged it back to his right and lifted a shot over the left pad of Flyers goalie Ray Emery.

"I wasn't in the first three, so I tried to have something," Flynn said. "Watch the goalie a little bit and have something if it's tied after the first three [shooters]. Just a move I work on a lot, and it paid off."

The Sabres improved to 2-3-1 over the stretch of six consecutive one-goal games.

"For the last number of games, I thought our effort has been there," Buffalo coach Ted Nolan said. "All one-goal games, and to finally come out on the better side of it is a good feeling, for sure."

Gionta and Nicolas Deslauriers scored in regulation for the Sabres. Michal Neuvirth made 36 saves through overtime, including a point-blank stop on Chris VandeVelde with 2:40 remaining in regulation. He then stopped three of four Flyers shooters in the tiebreaker.

It was Neuvirth's first win since Nov. 15; he was 0-10-1 in his previous 12 appearances.

"It's a big relief," Neuvirth said. "Pretty happy I'm not going to hear any more questions about the losing streak. For me personally, it's big."

Ryan White and Jakub Voracek scored for the Flyers (24-23-11). Emery, making his sixth straight start, made 30 saves through overtime.

Philadelphia moved to within six points of the idle Boston Bruins in the race for the final Eastern Conference wild-card berth into the Stanley Cup Playoffs, but a home loss to Buffalo, which is last in the NHL standings, felt like a missed opportunity. It was the Flyers' second straight loss to a team below them in the standings; they lost 5-2 to the Columbus Blue Jackets on Tuesday.

"It's rough," Flyers defenseman Mark Streit said. "It's annoying. We seem to have a hard time against teams a little bit behind in the standings. You know those points are crucial, and we couldn't find a way today to get it done."

The Flyers had their chances, with 38 shots on goal. They went 1-for-4 on the power play, including a missed chance on a man-advantage midway through the third period when the Sabres' Chris Stewart was sent off for hooking.

"We're definitely not happy about it," Flyers coach Craig Berube said. "In saying that, tonight we've got to find a way to score another goal. We didn't."

With a tough back-to-back set coming Saturday and Sunday against the Nashville Predators and Washington Capitals, the Flyers remain positive that a postseason spot remains within their grasp.

"We're playing good hockey," Philadelphia captain Claude Giroux said. "We're playing as a team. Every game is tight at the end of the year, and we know that. We just need to play 60 minutes of it. ... We had good chemistry out there, we had a lot of good chances. But it's obviously disappointing."

The Sabres opened the scoring on a goal by Deslauriers that he mostly fanned on but got enough to send it knuckling past Emery at 4:41 of the first period for his first goal in 21 games. It was Deslauriers' fifth goal.

The Flyers tied the game less than three minutes later on White's first goal since Feb. 8, 2014, when he played for the Montreal Canadiens, but the Sabres took back the lead 38 seconds into the second period on Gionta's sixth goal.

Torrey Mitchell put a bouncing shot on net that Emery stopped but couldn't control. Gionta got to the front of the net and batted the puck out of the air and past Emery.

The goal gave Gionta 500 career points; he's the 49th American-born player to reach that milestone. The assist was Mitchell's 100th career point.

"One of those bounces that you'll take," Gionta said. "You've got to work for your bounces. It's finally nice to get one. ... Just throwing pucks at the net is a big key. And you've got to have guys going [to the net]. Mitchell throwing the puck at the net is the first key. We haven't had that all year consistently, but when we do it we get those bounces."

The Flyers tied the game 2-2 on Voracek's sharp-angled power-play goal off the rebound of a Wayne Simmonds shot at 8:45 of the second period. It was Voracek's 19th goal of the season but his first against a goalie in 15 games, dating to Jan. 12 against the Tampa Bay Lightning. Voracek had an empty-net goal against the Washington Capitals on Feb. 8.

With the assist, Simmonds has at least a point in six straight games, tying his career-best streak; he has four goals and four assists in that span. He also had a six-game point streak from Nov. 25-Dec. 5, 2009, with the Los Angeles Kings.

The Sabres' Zemgus Girgensons came close to breaking the 2-2 tie when he got into the Flyers crease with 5:11 remaining and knocked in the puck, but after the referees conferred, it was ruled Girgensons had pushed the puck between his legs with his glove.

Neuvirth did enough to keep the Sabres in the game, making 16 total saves in the third period and overtime, including 12 in the third.

"For a young goaltender trying to establish himself as a No. 1, the difference-maker, that's what you've got to be," Nolan said. "And he was the difference-maker tonight. He was a big reason we got the two points, and it was good for him."

Thursday started a stretch of six games in 10 days for the Sabres, who host the New York Rangers on Friday. Buffalo hopes to keep its strong play going.

"We've got a tough schedule coming up, a lot of games," Neuvirth said. "But if you're going to play like that, I believe we've got a chance against any team."

Sabres seek rare winning streak facing Rangers

By Benjamin Zweiman

NHL.com

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RANGERS (34-16-6) at SABRES (17-37-4)

TV: MSG, MSG-B, BELL TV

Season series: Rick Nash, Derick Brassard and Dan Boyle each had a goal and an assist in the New York Rangers' 6-1 win against the Buffalo Sabres at Madison Square Garden on Jan. 3. Buffalo goalie Michal Neuvirth was pulled after allowing four goals on nine shots. New York goalie Henrik Lundqvist made 24 saves. This game was scheduled for Nov. 21 but was postponed because of significant snow in Buffalo.

Rangers team scope: New York (74 points) is tied for second place in the Metropolitan Division with the Washington Capitals after a 5-4 shootout loss to the Vancouver Canucks on Thursday. "Any time you score four goals you want to win the game," goalie Cam Talbot said. "Obviously you never want to give up chances like that and goals like that. Four goals should be enough most nights, and that's on me. I have to come up with a way to make an extra save." The loss ended a four-game winning streak. Nash scored his 36th goal. Talbot made 24 saves in his eighth straight start; he is 5-1-2 since Lundqvist was ruled out at least three weeks because of a vascular injury on Feb. 6. Mackenzie Skapski could make his NHL debut if Talbot is given the night off. Center Derek Stepan had a goal and an assist for his third straight multipoint game (two goals, five assists). The Rangers have won five straight games against the Sabres and are 4-1-0 in their past five at First Niagara Center.

Sabres team scope: Buffalo will try to win two in a row for the first time since a four-game winning streak from Dec. 9-15; it is 4-21-2 since. Brian Flynn and Brian Gionta scored in a shootout to end a four-game losing streak with a 3-2 win against the Philadelphia Flyers on Thursday. "To come out on the winning side, it's a good feeling for sure," coach Ted Nolan said, according to the Sabres on Twitter. Gionta scored in regulation for his 500th NHL point. Neuvirth stopped three shootout attempts and made 36 saves in his third straight start since goalie Jhonas Enroth was traded to the Dallas Stars on Feb. 11. Neuvirth has allowed five goals on 103 shots (.951 save percentage) in his past three starts. "For a young goaltender trying to establish himself as a No. 1, the difference-makers, that's how you've got to be," Nolan said.

Buffalo Sabres: What options do they have in net for the future?

By Matt Clouden

Bleacher Report

February 19, 2015

The Buffalo Sabres have had many struggles this season, that much is known.

But as much as they have struggled in most aspects, the Sabres have been buoyed at times by some pretty solid goaltending.

While the numbers have not been spectacular, it's hard to say anything too negative about the platoon of Jhonas Enroth and Michal Neuvirth this season. Enroth won 13 games in 37 appearances, including a 9-2-0 stretch from Nov. 18 to Dec. 15. Neuvirth has amassed a contextually impressive .911 save percentage and has looked great at times as well.

But the band was broken up when Sabres general manager Tim Murray traded Enroth to the Dallas Stars last week, effectively making Neuvirth the de facto starter for the rest of the season.

The Enroth deal did bring Anders Lindback over from the Stars, but it seems that move was made more to make room for Enroth on the Dallas roster than as an actual acquisition for the Sabres.

So where does this leave the Sabres in net moving forward?

The easy answer is Neuvirth, who looked especially impressive in a 2-1 shootout loss to the New Jersey Devils Tuesday night in which he stopped all 29 shots at even strength in the effort.

But it's not that simple.

First, Neuvirth is an unrestricted free agent at the end of the season, and there has been no public acknowledgement of any contract talks by Murray or Neuvirth's camp. That's not to say nothing has happened, but there hasn't been anything from either side that makes one think Neuvirth will definitely be back next season.

And what may be the most salient point in discussing Neuvirth is his inconsistency. In his first full season with the Washington Capitals in 2010-11, Neuvirth posted a solid 2.45 goals against average and an equally strong .914 save percentage. The next season his GAA ballooned to 2.82 and his save percentage plunged to .903.

After that regression, Neuvirth never reclaimed the starting job, ceding it to Braden Holtby and opening the door for the trade to the Sabres last trade deadline.

Now, Neuvirth's GAA is an awful 3.16 this season, but to put most of the blame on him for that, and not on the 34.7 shots allowed per game by the Sabres is misguided.

Yes, he has only won three games this season, but some nights it seems like the Sabres were lucky to have won more than three games all year. This is a bad team, and bad teams typically don't make their goalies look good.

But even in a solid season, Neuvirth has had his inconsistencies, including allowing six goals on 29 shots against the Blues and four goals on nine shots against the Rangers.

But if Neuvirth is not "the guy," who is?

Lindback seems to be a quick fix more than anything. He has struggled mightily at the NHL level the past few years, and barring a miraculous turnaround, it seems logical that he will hit the market July 1 as a free agent.

The Sabres have three notable goalie prospects in Rochester of the AHL, but none have really separated themselves from the others for various reasons.

The biggest name is likely Matt Hackett, who recently returned from a gruesome injury suffered against the Boston Bruins at the end of last season. Hackett has played one game for the Sabres this season in Vancouver and was frankly hung out to dry on that occasion, seeing 37 shots and giving up four goals.

Hackett struggled when he first returned, but seems to have settled in Rochester. He has a long way to go, but he's shown the flashes to make one think he could be an option moving forward, at least in a platoon.

Another name that may be recognizable down in Rochester is Andrey Makarov, another young netminder that dressed (but never played) for the Sabres last season. After a fast start to his AHL career, Makarov has struggled this season, posting a GAA of 3.01 with a save percentage of .901.

The last player in the pipeline in Rochester is Nathan Lieuwen. Lieuwen struggled early this season before being sidelined with a concussion that has kept him out of action the past few months. Lieuwen's season, and potentially his career, could be over.

So even working under the assumption Neuvirth is going to be back, which may be a stretch, there still could be an opening at the second goaltender position next year. The most likely possibility is Hackett at this point, but unless he gets seven more games at the NHL level, he too will become an unrestricted free agent.

That opens up the possibility of testing the free-agent market to find their guy, bringing names like Antti Niemi and Devan Dubnyk into play, but there probably isn't going to be a full-fledged starting goalie available on the open market.

That notion brings one to the trade market, an area Murray has not shied away from lately. But instead of targeting an established veteran, Murray may look to acquire a young player with starting potential who is blocked by a current standout.

Boston's Malcolm Subban has been the most popular name in that group, but other names to keep an eye on include Magnus Hellberg in Nashville, Oscar Dansk in Columbus and Zachary Fucale in Montreal.

Yet another route Murray and the Sabres could go is to sign a college free agent. Almost every year there are a few NCAA players that went undrafted that have proven themselves to be NHL-caliber players. The Sabres recently signed Chad Ruhwedel as a college free agent.

This year, the biggest prize may be Boston University goalie Matt O'Connor. O'Connor has a sterling 2.07 GAA and an equally impressive .931 save percentage, all while racking up 16 wins this season for the Hockey East-leading Terriers. Another certain BU player may have gotten a bit more attention from Sabres fans this season, but O'Connor should be a close second.

Most NCAA free agents typically want one thing when they sign, and that's guaranteed playing time. O'Connor would get that in Buffalo, provided his level of play translates well.

If anything it's a low-risk flier on a 6'5" netminder, who has played fantastically this season. It's not too much of a stretch to think that without Jack Eichel standing in front of him, O'Connor would be a Hobey Baker finalist.

With all of these options, but no clear solution, one thing is for certain: Murray has a lot of decisions to make with regard to the goaltender position.

Whether it's an internal solution or an external one, it's one of the biggest questions Murray needs to answer to ensure that this rebuild maintains its upward swing. The easiest option is to just let Neuvirth show what he can do, but the prospect of signing O'Connor could also be intriguing.

The positive is there are solutions available to Murray, it's just a matter of which one he decides to go with for next season.

Traded Sabres make for active real estate market

By James Fink

Buffalo Business First

February 19, 2015

With Tyler Myers putting his Middlesex Road house on the local real estate market this week, here's a quick look back at some of the sale prices that other former Buffalo Sabres' players received for their residential sales.

Myers, dealt away to the Winnipeg Jets, has put a \$1.7 million asking price for his 5,600-square-foot, five-year-old house which, if sold at that price, will be the most paid for a City of Buffalo private residence. RealtyUSA's Maureen Flavin, who is handling the Myers' listing, said interest is very strong on the house, given its prime location and other amenities.

As for other recently Sabres' players who have been traded away by the rebuilding team:

- Goalie Ryan Miller sold his Potomac Avenue townhouse for \$640,000 two summers ago, according to documents filed in the Erie County Clerk's office. Miller was still a Sabre at that point, but entering the final year of his then five-year contract. Miller leased a Waterfront Village townhouse from the summer of 2013 until he was traded one year ago.
- Defenseman Robyn Regehr, according to clerk's office records, sold his Chapin Parkway house in Buffalo for \$710,000 in September 2013, five months after he was traded.
- Fellow defenseman Jordan Leopold sold his Curry Lane house in Clarence for \$770,000, according to clerk's office documents. Forward Jason Pominville, who lived on the same street, got the same price for an almost identical home.

Sabres pick up 3-2 SO win over Flyers

By Dan Cave

WGR 550

February 19, 2015

Brian Gionta scored in regulation and again in the first round of a shootout, helping lift the Sabres over the Flyers on Thursday 3-2. Brian Flynn provided the shootout winner, giving Buffalo its first win in four games.

The two sides traded goals in the opening period with Nicolas Deslauriers and Ryan White both finding the net. Deslauriers put Buffalo ahead 1-0 just 4:41 into the game, swatting Brian Flynn's bouncing pass by Ray Emery. Philadelphia answered later in the period on Ryan White's first goal of season and first goal as a member of the Flyers. White gathered a long rebound off the back wall and ripped the puck into the Buffalo net.

Buffalo regained the lead in the first minute of the second period on Gionta's sixth goal of the season and 500th career point. The Sabres captain tapped home a Torrey Mitchell rebound, making it 2-1. Jakub Voracek tied things up once again at 8:45 of the second on the man advantage. With Zemgus Girgensons in the box for interference, Voracek whistled the puck between Michal Neuvirth's pads for his 19th of the year.

The Sabres appeared to go ahead once again late in the third, but Zemgus Girgensons shoveled the loose puck into the Flyers net with his glove. Following a scoreless overtime period, the two sides headed to the shootout where Gionta and Flynn found the net for Buffalo. Voracek was the only Flyer to score during the shootout.

Neuvirth was strong in net, stopping 36 shots for his first victory since November 15, 2014. Emery came up with 30 saves in the loss. Buffalo returns home on Friday for a 7:00 p.m. faceoff against the New York Rangers. Hear the call on WGR 550 and the Buffalo Sabres Radio Network.

1st Period

Goals

4:41 - BUF - Nicolas Deslauriers (5) (Brian Flynn, Rasmus Ristolainen)

7:23 - PHI - Ryan White (1) (Braydon Coburn, Brayden Schenn)

Penalties

9:38 - PHI - Jakub Voracek (2 min., high sticking)

2nd Period

Goals

0:38 - BUF - Brian Gionta (6) (Torrey Mitchell, Matt Moulson)

8:45 - PHI - Jakub Voracek (19) (PPG) (Wayne Simmonds, Sean Couturier)

Penalties

7:41 - BUF - Zemgus Girgensons (2 min., interference)

9:52 - BUF - Tyler Ennis (2 min., goaltender interference)

19:46 - BUF - Chris Stewart (2 min., roughing)

3rd Period

Goals

None

Penalties

1:13 - PHI - Brayden Schenn (2 min., tripping)

3:25 - BUF - Torrey Mitchell (2 min., roughing)

3:25 - PHI - Claude Giroux (2 min., roughing)

10:06 - BUF - Chris Stewart (2 min., hooking)

19:02 - PHI - Nick Schultz (2 min., tripping)

Overtime

Goals

None

Penalties

None

Shootout

PHI - Jakub Voracek - GOAL

BUF - Brian Gionta - GOAL

PHI - Claude Giroux - MISS

BUF - Zemgus Girgensons - MISS

PHI - Wayne Simmonds - MISS

BUF - Tyler Ennis - MISS

PHI - Sean Couturier - MISS

BUF - Brian Flynn - GOAL

Goaltending

BUF - Michal Neuvirth (36 saves, 38 shots)

PHI - Ray Emery (30 saves, 32 shots)

Power Plays

BUF - 0 of 3

PHI - 1 of 4

Hamilton: Sabres look to derail the Flyers

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 19, 2015

Philadelphia, PA (WGR 550) -- Tonight's game was delayed an hour as the Flyers inducted Eric Desjardins into the team's Hall of Fame. He joins Bobby Clarke, Bernie Parent, Keith Allen, Bill Barber, Ed Snider, Rick MacLeish, Fred Shero, Barry Ashbee, Gary Dornhoefer, Gene Hart, Reggie Leach, Joe Scott, Ed Van Impe, Tim Kerr, Joe Watson, Brian Propp, Mark Howe, Dave Poulin, Ron Hextall, Dave Schultz, John LeClair and Eric Lindros.

The Sabres played a nice first period scoring first and keeping the shots down.

Marcus Foligno won a faceoff to the right of Ray Emery and got the puck back to Rasmus Ristolainen. He hit Brian Flynn in the shins with a pass the Flynn knocked out of the air and bounced in front to Nic Deslauriers. Deslauriers was alone in front and got a good piece of the puck to score his first goal and point in 22 games.

The Flyers used home ice advantage to tie it. Braydon Coburn knows the boards are lively here and ripped a shot off the back wall. Ryan White was alone in front and he easily scored his first goal as a Flyer.

Buffalo had some good opportunities including a 3-on-2 in which Tyler Ennis decided to pass to a covered Zemgus Girgensons instead of shooting on a goalie with an .890 save percentage.

Chris Stewart had two players open in front but poor passing took those opportunities away. In one of them Andrej Meszaros broke free down the slot, but Stewart pass was in his skates. The other one was right off the bat when he looked for Ennis who would've had a tap in, but missed him again.

People give Andre Benoit a hard time and he has struggled this season, but ever since Zach Bogosian showed up, his play has improved a lot. Jake Voracek came down one on one against Benoit and he never gave an inch and rode the NHL's second leading scorer to the corner.

Zach Bogosian again led the team in hits as he had three in the first 20 minutes.

It only took 38 seconds in the second period for Brian Gionta to pick up his 500th NHL point. Emery knocked a pretty soft shot by Torrey Mitchell out to the slot and Gionta tapped home his 6th.

The Flyers tied it on the power play when Neuvirth made a great save on Wayne Simmonds, but Voracek made no mistake with the rebound to score his 19th.

I almost never complain about officiating, but Kelly Sutherland embarrassed himself in that period. Chris Stewart went in on a breakaway which Emery stopped. Tyler Ennis was skating hard to get to a rebound with half an open net in front of him by Nicklas Grossmann took his skates out with a trip that sent him into Ray Emery. Sutherland called goaltender interference.

"I just saw the puck sitting there, I went to go shoot it in and felt I got tripped into Emery," said Ennis. "The ref apologized to me. He said he messed up the call, so that was nice to hear."

A few minutes later down in Sutherland's corner Torrey Mitchell was badly high stuck and there was no call. I guess Sutherland doesn't want to ref in the playoffs.

Voracek hit a post solid during the Ennis penalty, but that was justice. Buffalo's passing didn't get much better, as Mitchell had a breakaway, but the pass missed him. Buffalo got caught in a change and almost fell behind as R.J. Umberger had a partial breakaway, but was stopped by Neuvirth.

Neuvirth made 15 saves in the period while Emery stopped 10.

In the third, Gionta found Matt Moulson skating alone through the slot, but Emery made a big save. Buffalo appeared to take the late lead, but the goal was waved off after replays showed Girgensons scooping the puck into the net with his glove.

After a scoreless overtime, the two sides headed to a shootout where Voracek opened the scoring. Neuvirth shut the Flyers down the rest of the way, however, and Buffalo got goals from Gionta and Flynn for the 3-2 win.

"By no means is it perfect, but the effort's there right from start to finish," said Gionta. "That's the key to these tight games, keeping yourself in it and giving yourself a chance."

"For the last number of games, I thought our effort has been there," said Ted Nolan. "All one-goal games and to finally come on the better side of it is a good feeling, for sure."

Neuvirth finished with 36 saves in the win, his first victory since November 15.

Sabres' Bogosian has had a calming influence

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

February 19, 2015

Philadelphia, PA (WGR 550) -- When the game was on the line in New Jersey, Ted Nolan sent his new defenseman over the boards. Zach Bogosian took over those 15 seconds and singlehandedly got the puck out to preserve one point. There wasn't the usual panic that we've seen for the past eight years and there was total confidence that he had the situation under control. Ted Nolan said, "When people come in from a different organization and they're used to playing a certain way, they want to take over and that's exactly why you get players like Zach to add that different look and that different look is what you have to do in order to be successful."

Andre Benoit has been his partner and he's looked more like the defenseman that played in Colorado last season. Nolan said, "I told him yesterday that I thought it was his best game of the year. He then asked if I was surprised and I wasn't surprised, he looked very comfortable and it looked like a good fit."

Tyler Myers was supposed to be a guy that could make players better, but it turned into the opposite. In Winnipeg, the Jets players are making him look better. In Bogosian's case, Nolan feels he will make players around him better, "No question, goaltenders make teams look real good and good defensemen makes the defense look good and good players make other people look good and Zach is one of those guys that can certainly make our team better and the partner he's playing with better."

Buffalo lost to the Flyers 2-1 on Sunday with both teams playing well enough, but talent winning out. Nolan said, "It was missed opportunities and it takes a few breaks here or there and if you get the right breaks at the right time, then that's the difference."

The Sabres have played three straight games scoring one goal. Tyler Ennis scored in New Jersey giving him just two goals in 10 games.

Michal Neuvirth has only given up three goals in his last two games, but he still hasn't won a game since November 15th. Tonight will be his fourth start in five games.

The Flyers have picked up points in nine out of 10 games. After beating the Sabres in Buffalo, they lost at home to Columbus, 5-2.

Ray Emery is between the pipes with a 10-10-3 record to go with a 3.22 goals against and .890 save percentage.

Join Pat Malacaro for the pregame beginning at 7:00 when he'll be joined by Ted Nolan, Torrey Mitchell and Cody Hodgson.

Sabres prospect Reinhart having strong season in juniors

By Howard Simon

WGR 550

February 19, 2015

He may be out of sight but Sam Reinhart is certainly not out of mind when it comes to the Buffalo Sabres.

The second overall pick in the 2014 NHL draft began the season with the Sabres but was sent back to his junior team, the Kootenay Ice, after nine games.

Reinhart has fared very well in what is likely his last season in the Western Hockey League, totaling 13 goals and 45 points in 33 games. He also came back with the right attitude, as opposed to sulking after the demotion.

"He came back and really turned our season around" Ice General Manager Jeff Chynoweth said during an interview on WGR on Thursday. "We were 3-13 when we got him back and we went on a run where for two months, we were the best team in the Western Hockey League."

Reinhart, who recently set the Kootenay franchise record for most career points with 287, did leave the Ice for a few weeks to take part in the World Junior Championships. Reinhart had two goals and five assists in seven games while wearing an "A" and helping lead Canada to the gold medal.

"It was absolutely huge for him" Chynoweth said. "When he got sent back (by the Sabres) that was a carrot for him to play in the world juniors. I thought his play was outstanding and when the games are big he takes his game to a whole different level. I thought he did that throughout the tournament."

Sabres ready to close out season series with Flyers on Thursday

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

February 19, 2015

PHILADELPHIA – A later puck drop means the Buffalo Sabres will have a little bit more time to prepare for their matchup against the Philadelphia Flyers.

A pregame ceremony honoring Eric Desjardins' induction into the Flyers Hall of Fame will push the start time back to 8 p.m. The Tops Game Night pregame show will begin at 7:30 p.m. on MSG-B and Bell. The game can also be heard live on WGR 550.

It'll be the third and final meeting between the two clubs this season. The Flyers have won both games so far, most recently on Sunday in Buffalo. Philadelphia took home a 2-1 victory thanks to a game-winning goal in the third period by Michal Raffl. The Austrian wing had the winner in the first content as well.

Buffalo is currently on a stretch in which seven of their past nine games have been decided by one goal. They're 2-6-1 over that span and know that if they want to change that, they can't have long-lasting lapses where a majority of the play is in their own end.

"It's like we've been talking about for a long stretch here. We've had really good part of games; we just haven't put it together for 60 many times," Sabres forward Tyler Ennis said after the morning skate at Wells Fargo Center. "We've got a good lineup. We've just got to come out hard, come out strong and that'll set the tone for the rest of the game. But we need 60 minutes tonight."

Ennis scored on Tuesday in New Jersey and has six points (3+3) in his past six road games, dating back to Jan. 18 at Detroit.

He's also had a lot of success in the City of Brotherly Love. Ennis has six points (2+4) in eight career road games in Philadelphia. It's also where he scored his first career goal on Nov. 14, 2009 in his NHL debut and the overtime winner in Game 5 of the 2011 Eastern Conference Semifinals.

"The [Philadelphia] fans are intense. They can be mean. That makes it fun," Ennis said. "There's good energy in here and hopefully we can have a good one tonight."

Buffalo's lineup will remain unchanged. Michal Neuvirth will start in goal and defenseman Tyson Strachan will serve as a healthy scratch.

BIG MINUTES

Zach Bogosian played a team-high 29:14 on Tuesday against the Devils, his second game with the Sabres since being acquired in a trade on Feb. 11. He skated 24:49 in his first game, setting a Sabres record for minutes played in a debut.

Bogosian is playing in all situations and filling a big role with Josh Gorges injured for an indefinite period of time and with Tyler Myers now in Winnipeg.

The play of Bogosian has impressed Sabres coach Ted Nolan and he thinks his style and attitude can be contagious.

"What he did throughout the first couple games he's [played] here, he's done a tremendous job," Nolan said. "The only thing we told him was to keep doing the same thing and everybody else will catch up."

He's already helping make those around him on the ice better. Nolan thought that Bogosian's defensive partner Andre Benoit had his best game of the season against New Jersey.

Benoit played 20:41 on Tuesday and he's relishing the chance to step up.

"I look at it as an opportunity to play more minutes and play a bigger role," Benoit said. "I just want to make sure I keep it going and can stay in that position for as long as possible."

PROJECTED LINEUP

80 Chris Stewart – 28 Zemgus Girgensons – 63 Tyler Ennis
26 Matt Moulson – 17 Torrey Mitchell – 12 Brian Gionta
82 Marcus Foligno – 65 Brian Flynn – 44 Nicolas Deslauriers
22 Johan Larsson – 37 Matt Ellis – 19 Cody Hodgson

61 Andre Benoit – 47 Zach Bogosian
51 Nikita Zadorov – 55 Rasmus Ristolainen
6 Mike Weber – 41 Andrej Meszaros

34 Michal Neuvirth
35 Anders Lindback

Scratched: 4 Josh Gorges (lower-body injury), 24 Tyson Strachan, 36 Patrick Kaleta (lower-body injury)
Injured Reserve: 8 Cody McCormick (blood clots), 9 Evander Kane (shoulder)

Gionta picks up 500th career point in win over Flyers

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

February 19, 2015

PHILADELPHIA – For the first time since in nearly four years, the Buffalo Sabres won a game in Philadelphia.

Brian Flynn's shootout winner lifted the Sabres over the Flyers 3-2 at Wells Fargo Center on Thursday. Buffalo's last win in the City of Brotherly Love came on March 5, 2011.

Nicolas Deslauriers and captain Brian Gionta tallied in regulation for Buffalo and Michal Neuvirth stopped 36 shots.

Gionta reached the 500-point plateau with his go-ahead goal in the second period. With assists on the goal, Torrey Mitchell hit the 100-career-point mark and Matt Moulson now sits on 299 career points.

"It's nice to get it behind you, but it's more about getting trying to get things on the right track here," Gionta said. "Pushing the right way, making sure we're going the right way. Those things are nice, but at the end of the day, wins are way better."

Eight of Buffalo's last 10 games have now been decided by one goal. They're now 3-7-1 in those games with points in back-to-back games since Dec. 13-15, during the team's run of 10 wins in 13 games. With the win and an overtime point in New Jersey on Tuesday, the Sabres collected three of four points on their two-game road trip.

"For the last number of games, I thought our effort's been there," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "All one-goal games and to come out the better side of it, it's a good feeling for sure."

MR. PERFECT

Flynn was Buffalo's fourth shooter and after Sean Couturier was stopped by Neuvirth, had a chance to win it. Emery had already made two great saves to deny Zemgus Girgensons and Tyler Ennis and Flynn used what we saw from those attempts to help him in his approach.

Flynn came in fast, deked and put a backhand in to seal the victory.

"The goalie seemed like he was pretty aggressive on some of our other shooters so I thought maybe one quick fake and fortunately, it worked," Flynn said.

He's now 2-for-2 in the shootout this season and both of them have been game-deciders. His other shootout goal was in Montreal on Nov. 29.

Buffalo is now 7-2 in the shootout this season.

AT LAST

For Neuvirth, it was his first win since Nov. 15, a 6-2 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs. He's now stopped 98 of 103 shots (.951 save percentage) over his past three games.

"For a young goaltender trying to establish himself as a No. 1, the difference-makers – and that's what you've got to be," Nolan said. "And he was the difference-maker tonight. He was a big reason why we got the two points and it was good for him."

GETTING THE BOUNCES

Deslauriers opened the scoring 4:41, putting a puck in that somehow found its way to him. Rasmus Ristolainen took a point shot that ended up bouncing off Flynn's pants. Flynn took a whack at it and it ended up on Deslauriers' stick. In front of the net, he took a swipe at it and it hit the back of the net.

"It's not the prettiest one, but we weren't there to get those ones a couple games ago," Deslauriers said.

Ryan White would tie the game at the 10:23 mark of the first, knocking home a rebound the caromed straight off the end boards. However, Buffalo would take the lead again early in the second.

Gionta was the beneficiary of another bounce in front of the net. When Mitchell's shots redirected off goaltender Ray Emery's pads, Gionta was right there to put it home just 38 seconds into the period.

Jakub Voracek scored on the power play 8:45 into the second to make things even once again.

Buffalo and Philadelphia then traded chances for the rest of the game, including a wide-open overtime period in which the teams exchanged rushes up and down the ice for 3:10 without a stoppage.

"It was a great effort all the way around and we need to continue to build off of that," Gionta said. "By no means is it perfect, but the effort's there right from start to finish. That's the key to these tight games, is keeping yourself in it and giving yourself a chance."

BACK TO BACK

The Sabres will play the second half of a back-to-back series Friday when they host the New York Rangers at First Niagara Center.

Puck drop is scheduled for 7 p.m. with the Tops Game Night pregame show starting at 6:30 p.m. on MSG-B and Bell. The game can also be heard live on WGR 550.

Buffalo is not scheduled to take the ice for a morning skate, so stick with Sabres.com for lineup news from Nolan later in the afternoon.