



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Sabres-Maple Leafs preview

By Jordan Garretson

Associated Press

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The Buffalo Sabres and Toronto Maple Leafs have struggled all season, and neither has shown signs lately that they can finish on a positive note.

Wednesday night's matchup in Toronto between two of the worst teams in the NHL seems likely to include some particularly bad defense.

Buffalo (19-42-5) is looking to avoid finishing a five-game trip winless after allowing 17 goals in defeats to Florida, Tampa Bay, Ottawa and Washington. The Sabres jumped out to a lead in Sunday's 6-1 loss to the Capitals on Johan Larsson's goal 2:35 in - the third time in those four losses that they scored first.

Buffalo was outshot 45-17 and is last in the league with 35.4 shots allowed per game and shot differential at minus-12.47. They've given up 40.4 shots over their last eight after surrendering 34.8 previously.

Toronto doesn't rank far ahead of Buffalo, allowing 33.1 per game and yielding 42-plus in three of four.

The Sabres could be even weaker defensively after blueliners Zach Bogosian and Andrej Meszaros left with injuries Sunday and didn't practice Monday, leaving coach Ted Nolan with five defensemen for the session. Bogosian has led Buffalo with 26:12 of average ice time in his 11 games since being acquired from Winnipeg.

Forward Nick Deslauriers had to fill in on defense against Washington at times.

"When you get opportunities to do something maybe a little out of your comfort zone or get more responsibility, it's a time to show people that you can handle it," he said. "Obviously, we're in a tough situation right here now. You've just got to find the positives."

While Buffalo owns the league's worst record, the Maple Leafs (26-35-6) have lost five of six and are an NHL-worst 4-18-3 since Jan. 12. They're on track to finish with their worst winning percentage since going 30-43 with nine ties in 1997-98.

Toronto squandered a 2-0 third-period lead and lost 4-3 in overtime to the New York Islanders on Monday.

"We did do some good things, but when you're up by two goals in the third on home ice, you should never lose the game," said forward James van Riemsdyk, who had a goal and an assist.

Center Nazem Kadri, fourth on the team with 36 points, was scratched after missing a team meeting Sunday.

Nolan didn't name a starting goaltender at Monday's practice but did say "The hot hand goes," which would suggest that Anders Lindback is likely to be in net. Lindback stopped 20 of 22 shots in relief against the Capitals after Matt Hackett gave up four goals on 23 shots.

Lindback has gone 2-0-0 with a 1.33 goals-against average in three games against the Maple Leafs, while Hackett has never faced them.

This matchup features a battle of ineptitude on special teams. Toronto's penalty killing has been abysmal over the last 11 games, allowing 13 goals on 44 chances for a 29.5 percent rate, up from 16.2 percent previously. Buffalo has scored one power-play goal on 24 opportunities in its past 10 contests.

The Leafs have won 10 of 11 at home in the series with Phil Kessel scoring once in each of his last five meetings.

Larsson playing a larger role in third stint with Sabres

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 10, 2015

Matt Ellis could tell Johan Larsson was in need of a pep talk. Larsson was disappointed at his latest demotion from Buffalo, disillusioned with his standing in the Sabres' organization.

"That's the way a pro career goes," Ellis said Tuesday. "You always talk to the young players and say, 'It's not all picket fences. You've got to deal with adversity, and that's how you build your character. That's how you build the player you want to be.'"

"I remember talking to him when he came back to Rochester after being disappointed. All you can do is pick yourself up, dust yourself off and do what you can control. It's nice to see Johan come up and have some success."

Two months after openly wondering about his place in the organization, Larsson's spot is now the top line. The 22-year-old will center for left wing Matt Moulson and right wing Tyler Ennis on Wednesday when the Sabres visit Toronto.

"They're good hockey players, so I'll try to be open and work my" butt off, Larsson said in First Niagara Center. "It's really good up there, so I'm excited."

Larsson's third stint with the Sabres this season is going way better than his second one. After averaging just 9:35 of ice time during eight games from late December to early January, Larsson is getting longer looks. He's skated 14:21 per night over his last six games and is averaging 15:43 since the trade deadline.

"Obviously, we traded a couple guys," Larsson said. "You get a bit more opportunity maybe. That's why I've played a little bit more. There's an opportunity here, and I think the guys see that."

What Ted Nolan has seen from Larsson is a better attitude. The coach was miffed after Larsson complained about the January demotion, with the forward telling the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle he didn't know what more he could do and that Nolan didn't trust him.

Nolan and Larsson talked after the Sabres recalled the forward last month.

"He's been a lot different," Nolan said. "I think he's really been concentrating on just playing. Sometimes when you're young and you first get up, it's how many minutes you get, who you're playing with and all those type of things. Then all of a sudden you go through it one more time and you're more mature on it."

Larsson has spent his share of nights on the fourth line since Feb. 15 but said nothing. He has a goal, assist and nine hits in the last four games, steadily moving up the depleted depth chart. The 5-foot-11, 206-pounder has wanted a chance on the top line, and he's got it.

"Just watching him in practice, you have a sense of what he can do, what he's capable of doing," Nolan said. "When he's moving his feet and he's engaged, he's pretty effective. Just like a big guy, when you don't move your feet you look slow. When you're a small guy, you don't move your feet, you look slow, too."

"It's just a matter of getting engaged from the start of a shift to the end of a shift. I'm not saying move your legs 100 mph for the whole 45 seconds or whatever it is, but you should for the vast majority move your feet. He's really good at angling people. He's really good at forechecking and going to the net, but he's got to move his feet in order to do that."

Larsson has proved he can produce in the minors. He has 29 goals and 78 points during 92 games with Rochester over the last two seasons. His NHL totals, however, are just two goals and eight points in 52 outings.

"He's definitely got some serious skill and real good hockey sense," said Ellis, who's played with Larsson at both levels. "You can play him in an offensive role, and he finds a way to produce. You can play him in a defensive role, and he's got a little bit of bite, little bit of sandpaper to his game that makes him effective. He's one of those guys that can play up your lineup or down your lineup, depending on what the need be.

"You want to see a guy take the ball and run with it, and Johan's starting to do that."

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Defensemen Zach Bogosian and Andrej Meszaros, who left the Sabres' previous game due to injuries, returned to practice Tuesday and proclaimed themselves ready to face the Maple Leafs. Nolan still has reservations.

"Might play, but we'll see," Nolan said. "They felt good today, but especially with one, we'll see how he feels tomorrow."

Bogosian departed Washington's arena Saturday with a walking boot.

"I knew it was kind of a day-to-day thing," he said. "I wasn't too concerned that it was too serious. It feels good now."

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Toronto took Tuesday off after losing to the New York Islanders, 4-3, in overtime Monday. Forward Nazem Kadri was a healthy scratch after sleeping in Sunday and missing a meeting. The Leafs are 1-4-1 in the last six games and have been outscored, 24-9.

Sabres, with injuries on defense, play Maple Leafs

By Evan Sporer

NHL.com

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SABRES (19-42-5) at MAPLE LEAFS (26-35-6)

TV: SN, MSG-B

Season series: The Toronto Maple Leafs and Buffalo Sabres have split two games this season, each team winning at home by four goals. Toronto forwards Phil Kessel and Tyler Bozak each had a goal and an assist in a 4-0 win at Air Canada Centre on Oct. 28, and Buffalo forward Zemgus Girgensons scored twice in a 6-2 win at First Niagara Center on Nov. 15.

Sabres team scope: Defensemen Zach Bogosian and Andrej Meszaros practiced Tuesday after each left Buffalo's game Saturday with an injury sustained blocking a shot against the Washington Capitals. Bogosian sustained a lower-body injury, and Meszaros has an upper-body injury. "Might play [Wednesday]," coach Ted Nolan told the Sabres website. "We'll see. They felt good today, we'll see how, especially with one, how he feels tomorrow." Center Johan Larsson, who scored against the Capitals, skated on the top line at practice between Matt Moulson and Tyler Ennis.

Maple Leafs team scope: Defenseman Petter Granberg was reassigned to the Toronto Marlies of the American Hockey League on Tuesday. Granberg was recalled on an emergency basis after Toronto announced defenseman Roman Polak would have season-ending hernia surgery. Forward David Booth left the game Monday against the New York Islanders after taking a skate to the abdominal area but returned and finished the game. Booth has a goal in three straight games and a four-game point streak (3-1-4). Forward Peter Holland (2-2-4) has a point in four straight.

Sabres vs. Leafs: Clash of the Titanics

By Lance Hornby

Toronto Sun

March 10, 2015

TORONTO - A member of the Leafs hockey office stopped by our work station the other day. No need to sneak a peek at the computer screen for the carving scars, he could guess the content.

"We aren't this bad," he insisted before departing.

Well, they could've fooled everyone the past 10 weeks, in which Toronto fell from playoff contention, fired its coach, went winless in 11 games and traded six players to get a head start salvaging the self proclaimed flagship franchise of the NHL.

On Wednesday, if they lose to the last-place Buffalo Sabres in a Clash of the Titanics, the Leafs could even strengthen their lottery chances for No. 1 pick Connor McDavid. But somewhere between fourth and sixth pick in the draft, with less than a 10% chance at moving up for McDavid, is their likely fate next month.

"We've talked to (general manager) Dave Nonis and his staff and our mandate is to win as many games as we can," assistant coach Steve Spott said during a conference call on Tuesday, a day off for the Leafs. "They demand we play our best 20 every night. That's our focus.

"We know Buffalo is having a challenging season (coming up on a goal differential of minus-100), but our motivation is to win."

Well and good, but it's also an ideal night for that PBS channel in Buffalo to have operators standing by for a cross-border pledge drive. More than a few disenchanted fans on both sides might re-up for Downton Abbey rather than tune in this downer. The Sun's Rob Longley reported that the St. Louis-Toronto game, a 6-1 Blues' romp, was possibly an all-time low for a Saturday telecast under current ratings data, an average of just 743,000 viewers.

Many fans from both ends of the Peace Bridge that watch or listen Wednesday will be hoping the other team makes the key save or goal, all in the name of better drafting.

Spott said that keeping players from slacking with 15 games to go, the trade deadline gone and little hope of improving their lot in the standings remains "our biggest challenge". For others hanging on to jobs, Peter Holland, Trevor Smith, Zach Sill and Tim Erixon, no prodding is necessary.

It's rather extreme to call this the worst Leafs team ever, though one of the most underachieving certainly applies. At one time they had a run of 10-1-1 and did become just the third Toronto entry since 1977-78 to win 20 games before Christmas. And thanks to their spectacular fall after New Year's, they'll be the first to hit that number and miss the playoffs. Toronto has been slightly better in recent days, getting points out of one-goal games for a record 3-4-1. It could open up a potential 17-point lead on Buffalo with a win. Jack Eichel might be further out of their reach, too, with a win against 29th-place Edmonton on Monday.

While Nonis addressed the players directly a few days ago about not throwing in the towel, Buffalo counterpart Tim Murray has been getting the nudge-nudge, wink-wink all season about moves that position his team to land McDavid. Of course he views his machinations differently.

"I was brought here into a team that was in the middle of a rebuild," Murray told the Buffalo News after the trade deadline. "I'm going to continue the rebuild and try to get better. If we finish 28th, that's where we'll pick. I assume the players that we have here will try to win every game. I assume the coaching staff will try to win every game. They've never had any interference from me from Day 1.

"The players have never been told by me to not win. There's never been any talk of that. The only talk I get of that is from the press."

As for the shell of a team Murray has kept for the final weeks of the schedule after the deadline, it's the price of a tear-down.

"We're in 30th place," he said. "Our time is the future, and we added assets for the future. I talked to (the surviving Sabres) and they all understood. When you are at the bottom or near the bottom, you trade out guys that can help other teams for future assets."

Jerry D'Amigo grateful for fresh opportunity with Sabres

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
March 10, 2015

TORONTO – Jerry D'Amigo understands an opportunity like the one he's enjoying with the Buffalo Sabres doesn't materialize very often.

Injuries and trades have opened up a regular spot on the fourth line for the 24-year-old, a hardworking winger with 25 games of NHL experience. The rebuilding Sabres are the Binghamton native's third organization since July.

The final 16 games could be D'Amigo's best – and last – chance to prove he deserves regular NHL duty.

"I think you get only a few opportunities in your career to make the most of it," D'Amigo said Tuesday inside the First Niagara Center after the Sabres prepared for tonight's game against the Maple Leafs, his old club. "You just don't want them to slip by."

D'Amigo believes he blew a great opportunity by failing to make the Columbus Blue Jackets out of training camp this season. Columbus, which acquired him from Toronto on July 1, traded him to the Sabres on Dec. 16 for Luke Adam, a swap of talented AHL players looking for a fresh chance.

"Now here's another opportunity, and you never know when another one's going to happen," D'Amigo said.

Five seasons into his professional career, D'Amigo has reached a crossroads.

"I'm still young, I'm still learning," he said. "But I think it's that time where I got to choose whether I'm going to be a full-time player in the NHL or a full-time player in the AHL. So it all starts here with Buffalo."

The 5-foot-11, 208-pound D'Amigo played 31 games with the Rochester Americans before the Sabres recalled him March 3.

"When I came to Rochester, it was a perfect fit," he said. "(I) played well and played into a call-up. So obviously it turned out pretty good."

D'Amigo has skated about 10 minutes in three pointless appearances on the left wing, mostly beside center Matt Ellis and Zac Dalpe.

"Jerry's giving us that energy we need from our so-called fourth line," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "But right now, almost all the lines, outside of a couple, are all the same. One thing with Jerry I noticed is he's engaged. He wants to compete and he's doing that job for us."

Tonight's contest against the hapless Leafs at the Air Canada Centre, the end of a five-game road trip, will be special for D'Amigo, the 158th pick by Toronto in 2009.

"You definitely want to show they made a mistake," D'Amigo said. "But you always want to play your best against the team that gave you away. I'm going to bring my best game."

D'Amigo was a pretty notable prospect as a teenager. Some fans might remember his world junior championship exploits. He starred during the 2010 tournament, scoring six goals and 12 points as Team USA won the gold medal. He won a bronze medal the next year in Buffalo.

"That's going to be memories throughout my whole life, a good memory to have to win gold and actually be a contributor," D'Amigo said.

D'Amigo played one NCAA season at R.P.I. before turning pro in 2010-11. He finally cracked the NHL last season, scoring one goal and three points in 22 games with the Leafs.

"Last year, I got an opportunity similar to this when there was a lot of injuries with Toronto," he said. "You just got to take advantage of it and show your worth and show that you can play in this league. I think that's what I have here and that's what I got to prove."

While D'Amigo has 66 goals and 144 points in 299 AHL games, he'll stick in the NHL as a checker.

"Obviously, I'm not going to be (on the) top two lines on a skill line," he said. "I've grown into my role to be a penalty kill and hardworking grinder guy. I'm not going to shy away from that anytime soon, unless I start putting up 20, 30 goals. I just got to start by keeping grounded in this league and go game-by-game and prove my worth in this league."

Sabres' Larsson is improving

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 10, 2015

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Ted Nolan was not happy with Mikhail Grigorenko's play in Ottawa, but another one of his young players may finally be taking advantage of his chance.

Johan Larsson had shown very little in his times up with the Sabres. Last season the 22 year old got 28 games with the Sabres picking up four assists. He showed very little of what has made him successful on the AHL level and this season it was the same.

Larsson got called up for the February 15th Philadelphia game, but it's been the three games since the trade deadline where he finally seems to be playing better. Larsson centered Brian Gionta and Marcus Foligno and did a better job. Ted Nolan said, "He's been a lot different, I think he's really been just concentrating on playing. Sometimes when you're young the first time you get up you worry about how many minutes you get and who you're playing with and then you go through it one more time and you're more mature and you just be thankful for being in the league number one, and whoever you're playing with because it's no disrespect to whoever you're playing with in this league, everybody can play."

With Phil Varone playing an inconsistent game, Larsson is now with Matt Moulson and Tyler Ennis. Nolan said, "Varone was there, but he played pretty good for a couple of games and now has tailed off a little bit, so we'll back him off a little bit and we'll give Larsson that look."

Larsson has played 52 NHL games and has two goals and six assists. Minnesota took him in the second round of the 2010 draft.

Andrej Meszaros got hit in the hand on Saturday and couldn't continue. He missed one practice and was back on Tuesday. He said he's ready to play.

Zach Bogosian also returned to practice after missing time in the Caps game. He said, "It was good, sometimes you need a couple of extra days to shake it off, so I felt good out there. I blocked a shot in the second, so sometimes it just takes a little while."

Nolan still wouldn't say who his goaltender will be Wednesday. The team bused up to Toronto after practice.

Bogosian, Meszaros could be available for Wednesday

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 10, 2015

Zach Bogosian and Andrej Meszaros were back at practice at First Niagara Center on Tuesday after missing Monday's skate.

Both Buffalo Sabres defensemen were injured Saturday night in Washington. Bogosian blocked a shot in the second period and left early in the third while Meszaros gloved down a puck midway through the first period and was then out for the rest of the game.

However, they both said they felt good after Tuesday's skate and could possibly be available for Buffalo's game on Wednesday in Toronto against the Maple Leafs.

Sabres coach Ted Nolan said they'll await further examinations before making a final decision on either of them. Faceoff from Air Canada Centre is set for 7 p.m. on MSG-B and Sportsnet. The game can also be heard live on WGR 550.

SETTLING IN

Buffalo's current lineup currently boasts six forwards from the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League, including all four centers. Not having to make an injury call up for the blue line would be a welcome relief.

All four of the team's centers – Johan Larsson, Philip Varone, Tim Schaller and Matt Ellis – have played big roles with the Amerks this year and are hoping to take advantage of extended time in the NHL.

Tim Schaller has played a variety of roles for the Sabres already in his nine games in Buffalo so far this season. He's currently second on the Amerks in scoring with 40 points (15+20), so while he does have some offensive upside, he has been focusing on being sound in his own end while up with the Sabres.

"My job here is to play well defensively, kill penalties," he said. "I'm not afraid to get in the shot lane of anybody, so I'll do that. I can fit on any line. The main goal there is not to switch my game, get pucks deep, take bodies and open up space for guys who are where to score."

At practice on Monday, Nolan switched the centers on his top line, putting Larsson with Matt Moulson and Tyler Ennis and moving Varone between Marcus Foligno and captain Brian Gionta.

This is currently Larsson's third recall of the season and Nolan has seen a change in his demeanor in the time between call ups.

"He's been a lot different. I think he's really been just concentrating on playing," Nolan said. "Sometimes when you're young and that first time you get up, [you worry about] how many minutes you get, who you're playing with and all those types of things.

"And then all of a sudden you go through it one more time and you're a little bit mature on it. And then you're just being thankful for being in the League, No. 1 and whoever you get to play with – it's no disrespect whoever you're playing with in this League. Everybody can play."

For Larsson, Nolan thinks one of the biggest things he needs to focus on is staying competitive throughout an entire shift.

"Just watching him practice, you have a sense on what he can do and what he's capable of doing," Nolan said. "When he moves his feet and he's engaged, he's pretty effective."

GOALIE TBD

Nolan wasn't ready to name a starting goaltender for Wednesday after practice. He said he'd meeting with goaltending coach Arturs Irbe and let the players know sometime later on Tuesday of the decision.

Matt Hackett started Saturday's game, but was pulled midway through the second period in favor of Anders Lindback.

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