



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*March 14, 2015*

## **Rangers-Sabres preview**

Associated Press

March 13, 2015

Cam Talbot has often carried the short-handed New York Rangers - who suffered another key injury this week - but he's expected to get some well-deserved rest Saturday night.

Mackenzie Skapski will try to keep the Rangers rolling in his second NHL start with another strong effort against the lowly Buffalo Sabres.

Talbot has started all but one game since New York (42-17-7) lost top goaltender Henrik Lundqvist to a vascular injury in his neck in early February, and the Rangers are 13-2-3 in his absence. Talbot went 7-1-1 with a 1.54 goals-against average in nine consecutive starts and allowed a total of five goals in his last five contests.

With New York playing its second set of back-to-back games in six days, he'll get to rest until Sunday's home matchup with Florida. On Saturday, the 20-year-old Skapski will get the start in the same place he made his successful NHL debut.

After giving up a goal in the first 14 seconds, he finished with 24 saves in a 3-1 victory over Buffalo on Feb. 20. Thirteen of those came in the final period.

"It's capitalizing on the opportunities. It's an important game," Skapski said. "Obviously, there's an expectation to win. If you lose, it kind of looks bad on the team and looks bad on me."

Skapski won't have New York's top-scoring defenseman Kevin Klein in front of him, as the veteran is out three to four weeks due to an upper-body injury suffered in the final minute of a 3-1 win at Washington on Wednesday.

"There's no doubt that he had been one of our more steady defensemen since the beginning of the year," coach Alain Vigneault said of Klein, who has nine goals, 17 assists and a plus-24 rating. "It's obviously a tough loss for us, but we've got to find a way like we have in the past to continue to win hockey games."

Klein's absence might not make much of a difference as the Rangers go for their seventh consecutive win over the Sabres (19-42-6), owners of the lowest point total in the league. New York has outscored Buffalo 24-8 in that streak and 9-2 in this season's two meetings.

The Sabres were outscored 20-9 on an 0-4-1 road trip that ended with a 4-3 shootout loss to Toronto on Wednesday.

Buffalo's new top line of Tyler Ennis, Johan Larsson and Matt Moulson each had three points, but the Sabres gave up the tying goal with 3:25 remaining.

"I don't think any of us are having the year as a team or personally that we wanted to have at the start of the year. It could be for a lot of different reasons, but I think you've got to find ways to get goals," said Moulson, who has recorded 10 of his 33 points in his last 10 games. "Obviously we haven't done a good enough job of that personally and as a team. You have to just keep finding ways."

Moulson scored on Skapski last month for his first point in eight matchups with the Rangers.

"He played pretty well last time so I don't think he's going to be nervous," Moulson said.

Rick Nash has 12 goals and five assists in his past 14 games against Buffalo, including two and two this season. Mats Zuccarello has recorded two goals and five assists in a six-game point streak in the series.

## **Sabres start fast, but then sputter**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

March 13, 2015

Here's a believe-it-or-not stat from a season full of them: The Buffalo Sabres have scored the first goal in nine of their last 10 games.

Normally, that's a ticket to victory. There are 19 teams in the NHL who entered Friday winning at least 65 percent of the time when scoring first, and 25 teams at 58 percent or better. The Sabres are just 16-16 when doing it, an outlier to the stats.

Their preparation and readiness for a game is still good, even in the face of their 30th place standing among NHL teams. Talent is what's wearing them out.

The Sabres will look for another quick start Saturday night when the red-hot New York Rangers come to First Niagara Center. Buffalo scored 14 seconds into the game when the teams met here Feb. 20 but didn't hit the net again in a 3-1 New York victory.

"It's pro sports, and people have a lot to play for no matter what time of the season or what place they're in," Buffalo winger Matt Moulson, the scorer in that game, said after Friday's practice in HarborCenter. "There's a lot of different things on the line. A lot of jobs on the line and futures. No matter who you are, you always have something to play for. That's what we have to bring with us."

"It's your job, right?" added defenseman Zach Bogosian. "You've got to show up every night and compete and play hard. In the position that we're in, it's not very fun. But these tight games are fun games to be in, and they're games we have to learn how to win. We have to play a better 60-minute effort."

The Sabres are just 3-5-2 in the last 10 games and in an 0-4-1 rut over the last five, even though they took a 1-0 lead in four of them.

Moulson beat Rangers rookie goalie Mackenzie Skapski 14 seconds into the game, and the rookie goalie, playing his first NHL game, then stopped the next 24 Buffalo shots. Skapski will play his second career game Saturday.

"He played pretty well last time, so I don't think he's going to be nervous," Moulson said. "I don't think it matters who's in the net, you just want to throw as many pucks as you can and try to make them feel uncomfortable whatever way that is."

Coach Ted Nolan is happy his team is ready for the opening faceoff pretty consistently when it would be easy for that not to be the case. But as pivotal times in games approach, the Sabres are getting burned by their lack of skill and their propensity for taking penalties and being unable to kill them.

Buffalo's goal differential is minus-18 in the first period of games. But it's minus-38 in the second period and minus-45 in the third.

"There's not much you can do except try to get yourself in better body position," said Nolan. "We like our starts. When teams turn it up a notch, we got to learn to defend better. If you watch practice today, that's exactly what we tried to key on is proper defensive positioning. If someone is going to beat you, they have to go through you instead of one move and get around you."

The Sabres will have to watch their defensive positioning because the Rangers hit town absolutely molten hot.

New York is 31-7-3 in its last 41 games and started play Friday as one of six teams atop the NHL's overall standing with 91 points. The Rangers had games in hand over all five teams they were tied with, so were listed as No. 1.

The Rangers are 4-0-1 in March and have allowed one goal or less in regulation in four straight road games for the first time in franchise history. Rick Nash is second in the NHL in goals with 39, just two off his career high of 41 set in 2003-04.

On the down side, stalwart defenseman Kevin Klein is out 3-4 weeks after taking an Alex Ovechkin wrist shot to the arm in the final minute of Wednesday's win in Washington. And the power play remains a work in progress with a 4-for-38 slump over the last 15 games that has dropped New York to 16th in the NHL.

"They're a team playing some really good hockey and it obviously shows where they are in the standings," Moulson said. "They've got a lot of fast forwards, a lot of good defensemen and they move the puck well. We have to make sure we're not turning it over, getting our forecheck going and getting pucks to the net while we're in there."

## **Sabres notebook: Skapski does encore start against Buffalo**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

March 13, 2015

New York Rangers goalie Mackenzie Skapski is just 20 years old and one of his claims to fame is that he was born on June 15, 1994 – the day after the Blueshirts beat Vancouver in Game Seven of the Stanley Cup final to win their only championship since 1940.

Skapski, a sixth-round draft choice in 2013, made his NHL debut with a win over the Sabres in First Niagara Center on Feb. 20. He hasn't played since, but he'll get a chance for game two – and win two – in the same place against the Sabres Saturday night.

The Rangers are 13-2-3 since starter Henrik Lundqvist went down with a blood vessel injury and red-hot Cam Talbot has started all but one of those games. In his lone start, Skapski gave up a goal to Matt Moulson just 14 seconds into his NHL career but then stopped 24 shots to post a 3-1 victory over the Sabres.

"The first game, you have to prove yourself," Skapski told the Bergen Record this week in Washington. "In a game like that, I don't think you get enough credit. If you do win, a lot of people say, 'It's Buffalo.' But, realistically, they're an NHL team as well. They're losing a lot of games by one goal. It looks bad on paper but they have some good players as well."

Talbot has started nine straight games, but Skapski has been working hard in practice to stay ready. The Rangers are still planning to have Lundqvist back for the playoffs.

"I don't think I'm as timid," Skapski said. "Walking into that game, I really had no idea what to expect. I feel like I'm improving every day. I'm really comfortable, and I feel if I need to go in as a replacement for Cam, I could do the job."

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Skapski's start will mark the 34th of the season in 68 games against the Sabres by a No. 2 or No. 3 goaltender.

According to Buffalo News calculations, the Sabres are 13-16-4 against the backups – but just 6-26-2 against No. 1 goaltenders. It should be noted the three games played by Philadelphia's Ray Emery and Ottawa's Andrew Hammond are counted for the backups, as they were playing as starters only in place of injured goalies who have appeared in far more games.

Buffalo's six wins against starters are all by one goal. Oddly enough, the only frontline netminder they've beaten twice this year is Montreal's Carey Price, and he's in the thick of the talk for the Hart Trophy as the league's most valuable player.

Other starters beaten by the Sabres are Los Angeles' Jonathan Quick, Washington's Braden Holtby, Carolina's Cam Ward and Detroit's Jimmy Howard. Ward and Howard were beaten in shootouts, meaning Buffalo has just four regulation wins over starters.

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The Sabres have not decided on a goalie for Saturday's game. Coach Ted Nolan said he would take the decision to the morning skate. Anders Lindback has played well since arriving from Dallas, posting a .914 save percentage and 3.16 goals-against average that are much better than his numbers with the Stars (.875 and 3.71).

Matt Hackett, meanwhile, has given up four goals in each of his two starts this season and was yanked after 33 minutes last Saturday in Washington. He has a 5.22 goals-against average and .867 save percentage.

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Sabres assistant coach Tom Coolen was not on the ice Friday and looks like he could be in the out-for-the season category. Coolen was spotted walking through HarborCenter with his lower left leg in a walking cast.

"I don't know what that is," said a smiling Nolan, who then dropped the punchline of "lower body, left leg."

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The Sabres will be selling autographed St. Patrick's Day-themed pucks prior to Saturday's game, with proceeds going to the Sabres Foundation. The pucks will be sold for \$20 in the 100 level concourse prior to the game.

Prior to Monday's game against Washington, the Sabres will wear green St. Patrick's Day jerseys during warmups. They will be auctioned on NHL.com until 9 p.m. on March 22.

## **Rangers goalie Skapski to start against Sabres**

By Brian Hunter

NHL.com

March 13, 2015

**RANGERS (42-17-7) at SABRES (19-42-6)**

**TV: MSG, MSG-B**

**Season series:** Rick Nash has two goals and four points, and Derick Brassard has one goal and four points as the New York Rangers have won the first two games this season against the Buffalo Sabres. Mackenzie Skapski made 24 saves to win his NHL debut in the most recent game.

**Rangers team scope:** Coach Alain Vigneault said Friday that Skapski, who hasn't played since his initial start against Buffalo, will be in goal. "It's the life of a backup ... we decided to ride the hot hand [Cam Talbot] and now [Skapski] will get a second game tomorrow and he will do well," Vigneault said in comments tweeted by the Rangers. Vigneault said Talbot, who has been a workhorse since the vascular injury sustained by goaltender Henrik Lundqvist, will start Sunday against the Florida Panthers at Madison Square Garden. Defenseman Matt Hunwick, who hasn't played since Feb. 24, will be back in the lineup in place of Kevin Klein, who is out 3-4 weeks after sustaining an upper-body injury Wednesday in a 3-1 win at the Washington Capitals. The Rangers remained in the D.C. area for the past few days, practicing Friday at Kettler Capitals Iceplex before leaving for Buffalo.

**Sabres team scope:** Buffalo returns home after getting swept (0-4-1) on a five-game road trip, though the Sabres managed one point from a 4-3 shootout loss Wednesday to the Toronto Maple Leafs. Their last win came in their previous game at First Niagara Center, a 6-3 victory against the Vancouver Canucks on Feb. 26. A bright spot of late has been forward Johan Larsson, who has goals in consecutive games and comes off a career-high three points against the Maple Leafs. "Larsson has really seized the moment," coach Ted Nolan said in comments tweeted by the Sabres. "When you get the opportunity it's good to see people really seize it." Larsson's linemates, veterans Matt Moulson and Tyler Ennis, each had three points against the Maple Leafs. "It's important to never get too high or too low," Moulson said of the Sabres' struggles. "Everyone goes through tough stretches. It's pro sports. Lots to play for."

## **Sabres' Matt Moulson won't make excuses for low offensive output**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
March 13, 2015

BUFFALO – There's a common theory why Sabres winger Matt Moulson has struggled offensively for the last two seasons. The three-time 30-goal scorer needs an elite center feeding him the puck regularly to be productive. Without one, the 31-year-old's pretty average.

To wit: Moulson averaged 32 goals and 57 points on the left wing beside New York Islanders superstar John Tavares over three full seasons. Moulson scored 15 goals and 44 points in 47 games two years ago and had six goals and nine points in 11 contests last season before the Isles dealt him.

Moulson has mostly struggled beside a slew of pedestrian or unproven centers with the rebuilding Sabres, compiling 21 goals and 62 points in 108 games, including 10 goals and 33 points in 64 contests this season.

Of course, the Sabres have scored only 122 times through 67 games, a pathetic 149-score pace that would break their own dubious NHL record for fewest goals in a season they set last season.

Still, Moulson, won't make any excuses for his weak production.

"I don't think any of us are having a year as a team or personally we wanted to have at the start of the year," Moulson said Friday inside HarborCenter after the Sabres prepared for tonight's game against the New York Rangers. "That could be for different reasons. But I think you have to find a way to get goals. Obviously, we haven't done a good enough job of that personally and as a team."

In the last two months, Zemgus Girgensons, Torrey Mitchell, Phil Varone and Johan Larsson have centered Moulson.

Girgensons, a talented youngster who's injured, would probably be a third-liner somewhere else right now. Mitchell's now a fourth-liner in Montreal. Varone and Larsson have 17 combined NHL points.

Moulson has made the best of a difficult situation, compiling two goals and 10 points in the last 10 games, his best stretch all season.

"I think the situation we're in, how we're doing, there's obviously going to be a lot of mixing of lines and trying to get guys going," Moulson said. "So that's only natural. I think you just got to get used to whoever you play with."

Moulson got used to Larsson quickly, scoring a goal and three points in Wednesday's 4-3 shootout loss in Toronto. Larsson also had three points and created Moulson's goal in their second game together.

"It was one game," Moulson said. "The whole thing about the NHL is being consistent and being able to perform night in, night out. He played great the other day. Hopefully, we can build off that."

Sabres coach Ted Nolan knows it would be easy for Moulson, linemate Tyler Ennis and captain Brian Gionta to get frustrated about the talent playing on their lines.

"They're very professional about it," Nolan said. "They're classy men and they're great hockey players. Matty's doing the best he can right now under the situations. Last game was probably one of his better games the whole season."

Naturally, the trying season has been tough on Moulson, one of Nolan's favorites. In the dressing room, he's often smiling and laughing. But playing for the NHL's worst team has sapped some confidence.

The Cornell University graduate didn't score until the 15<sup>th</sup> game. He also endured a career-long 16-game goal drought earlier this winter.

"I think you go in tough stretches your confidence dips a little bit," he said. "That's the struggle sometimes, trying to keep it on an even-keel level. I think you can never get too high or too low. It's amazing a little lack of confidence, how much it really affects your game.

"I think recently I've been trying to get it back. I don't think it's gone. I think sometimes you have some tough stretches. Sometimes great things come in a hard time. Hopefully, that's the case."

Moulson, who finished last season in Minnesota, envisioned "a bright future" when he signed a five-year, \$25 million contract July 1. He knew then there would be "some growing pains."

"I don't think developing a team that's going to win consistently comes overnight," Moulson said. "I think that's a process of putting the right guys in the right spots and getting the right guys and all sorts of things.

"I know it's a process, and I believe in it. I believe in the Pegulas (the owners), (general manager) Tim Murray. I think we're going to do great things here."

## **Sabres to face Rangers backup goalie Mackenzie Skapski again**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
March 13, 2015

BUFFALO – With star goalie Henrik Lundqvist sidelined by a neck injury, the New York Rangers have been riding backup Cam Talbot for six weeks, starting him 17 of the last 18 games.

Talbot's one breather came Feb. 20 in Buffalo, when unknown rookie Mackenzie Skapski subbed. After allowing a goal 14 seconds into his NHL debut, the 20-year-old settled down, stopping 24 shots in the Rangers' 3-1 win against the Sabres.

Skapski is expected to start again tonight against the Sabres inside the First Niagara Center.

"He played pretty well last time, so I don't think he's going to be nervous," Sabres winger Matt Moulson, who beat Skapski, said Friday following an up-tempo practice inside HarborCenter. "I don't think it matters who's in the net. You want to throw as many pucks as you can, try to make them feel uncomfortable, whatever that is."

Despite a 3-6-1 record, the Sabres have scored first in nine of the last 10 games.

Why have the Sabres lost so many games after scoring first? Eventually their opponent's talent becomes too much to handle.

"There's not much we can do," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "When (Phil) Kessel decides to turn it up, there's not much you can do except try to get yourself in better body position. We like our starts. When teams turn it up a notch, we got to learn to defend better. You watch practice today, that's exactly what we tried to key on."

**Notes:** Nolan said he hasn't picked a goalie for tonight, the Sabres' first home game since Feb. 26. Anders Lindback has started three of the last four games. ... The banged-up Sabres have one more injury. No one has been spared this season. Assistant coach Tom Coolen was wearing a walking boot Friday and stayed off the ice. "I don't know what that is," Nolan joked. ... The Sabres have lost five straight games since beating Vancouver 6-3 in their last home game. ... The Rangers, who have won three straight games, began Friday in a six-way tie for the NHL lead with 91 points.

## **Sabres' Moulson looking for ways to score**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 13, 2015

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- In three full seasons with the Islanders, Matt Moulson scored 30, 31 and 36 goals. In the lockout season he was on a 26 goal pace.

His numbers over his career give him 27 goals per season, but this season he's hit a snag. The goal he scored in Toronto was only his 10th. He's had numerous centers this season and Ted Nolan has said many times that if Moulson had a legitimate play making center, he'd score goals. Moulson said it's not easy, but it's also not an excuse, "You try to find chemistry with your line mates and hopefully that comes quicker than others, but sometimes it doesn't."

"I think the situation that we're in and how we're doing there's going to be a lot of mixing of lines and that's only natural, but you just have to get used to whoever play you with, it's the pros so it's always changing with injuries and trades. I'll never use it as an excuse if that's what you're asking for."

As far as what Nolan said about his winger Moulson countered, "I don't think any of us are having years as a team or personally that we wanted to have when we started the year, so that could be for a lot of different reasons, but I think you have to find ways to get goals and we haven't done a good enough job of that personally and as a team, so you just have to keep finding ways."

In their first game together Moulson, Tyler Ennis and Johan Larsson had nine points as a line. Moulson said let's not get ahead of ourselves, "It's one game, I don't think, you know the whole thing about the NHL is being consistent night in and night out, so he played great (Larsson in Toronto) so hopefully we can build off that."

With losing comes a loss of confidence with some players. Moulson isn't alone when it comes to that, "I think when you go into tough stretches, your confidence dips a little bit and that's the struggle to try to keep that at an even keel level, you can never get too high or too low and it's amazing how much a little lack of confidence effects your game." Moulson added, "Recently I've been trying to get that back, I mean I don't think it's gone, sometimes you have tough stretches and great things come out of hard times, so hopefully that's the case."

Everybody returned to practice on Friday with Cody Hodgson back with Tim Schaller and Nic Deslauriers.

Nolan wouldn't say who will start in net or which six defensemen will play Saturday against the Rangers. Buffalo had been on the road for five straight with the last home game February 26th against Vancouver.

## **Ristolainen continues to grow on and off the ice**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 13, 2015

Rasmus Ristolainen has been a big part of the Buffalo Sabres defense this season and Saturday night against the New York Rangers will mark his 99th career NHL game.

The 20-year-old Finnish defenseman, in his second NHL season, has four goals and 11 points in 63 games this season. Drafted eighth overall in the 2013, Ristolainen has learned a lot in his two pro seasons in North America and is looking to finish the season out strong.

"I think I've been going forward in every situation," he said after Friday's practice at HARBORCENTER. "I need to get some big steps in the summertime before next year and just try to enjoy these last 15 games."

He's also looking to find some more stability and consistency in his game. There were stretches in the middle of the season when Sabres coach Ted Nolan wanted to dial his minutes back a bit and keep him in positions in which he could succeed.

Ristolainen has averaged over 19 minutes per game this year and his ice time lately has increased. He played 25:35 in Washington on Saturday and 24:51 in Toronto on Wednesday.

"There's been ups and downs for me. For next year and forward, I'm just trying to keep the level the same all the time. Right now it's been a little up and down too much."

In the offseason, Ristolainen put a heavy focus on improving his dietary habits and his training regime. He came into camp about 20 pounds lighter this year and said that work has really helped him this season.

He missed a few games back in December due to illness and Nolan thinks he's bounced back well from that bout – in large part because of how he approaches the game off the ice.

"The one thing about him, he's very mature for his age," Nolan said. "He doesn't get rattled too much. If he makes a mistake – sometimes when you're younger, you have a tendency to let that bother you for the rest of the period and sometimes the rest of the game. But for him, he seems to shake it off pretty quick."

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### **THE NEW TOP LINE**

Alternate captain Matt Moulson had three points against Toronto as did his linemates Tyler Ennis and Johan Larsson. It hasn't been the smoothest season for Moulson, who has had four 30-goal seasons in his career. He has just 10 in 64 games this year. However, he's been working hard to stay positive through it all.

"I don't think any of us are having the year as a team or personally that we wanted to have at the start of the year. It could be for a lot of different reasons, but you've got to find ways to get goals," he said. "Obviously we haven't done a good enough job of that personally and as a team. You have to just keep finding ways."

He hopes that his new line can develop some chemistry and consistency through the final stretch of 15 games. He'd played with Ennis a lot this season, but Wednesday was the first time Larsson had a shot on the top line. Each player ended up with a goal and two assists, factoring in on all three Buffalo goals.

"The situation we're in and how we're doing, there's obviously going to be a lot of mixing of lines and trying to get guys going," Moulson said. "That's only natural, but I think you've just got to get used to whoever you play with."

Nolan liked what he saw from the line and how Larsson stepped up to the plate.

"The one thing I really liked about him is he separated a lot of big guys from the puck with his body position," Nolan said. "He moved his legs offensively as well as defensively. He was gritty. [Maple Leafs captain Dion] Phaneuf, a couple times he got him rattled and being a pain in the rear out there. Those are all the things you have to do to separate yourself."

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