



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

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Skapski, Yandle help lift Rangers past Sabres 2-0

By Nick Mendola

Associated Press

March 14, 2015

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Mackenzie Skapski keeps checking off career milestones against the Buffalo Sabres.

The New York Rangers' rookie goaltender made 20 saves to pick up his first NHL shutout in a 2-0 win over Buffalo, three weeks after beating the Sabres to pick up his first NHL win.

"I didn't even digest the win yet, let alone the shutout," Skapski said.

The Rangers made him sweat it out despite their last-place opponent. Keith Yandle's third-period goal broke a scoreless tie, and Martin St. Louis added an empty net goal to finish off the Rangers' fourth-straight win.

"He gave us a chance to win the hockey game," defenseman Marc Staal said. "It's good for him. It's a good milestone for a goalie. It's great he can get it early."

The Rangers have the best record in the league after Saturday's win, and are 13-1-2 since Feb. 8.

"We have a very underrated offensive defensive team," Skapski said. "That's what makes us the best team in the NHL right now."

After killing off a penalty, the Rangers broke the scoreless deadlock when Yandle's high wrist shot from the point went through a maze of players to beat a screened Anders Lindback.

"I thought for a second that I didn't know if it got tipped, so maybe I shouldn't celebrate," Yandle said. "I don't really remember too much."

The goal was Yandle's first since being acquired from Arizona on March 1. All four wins on the streak have come on the road, as the Rangers have allowed just two goals.

Lindback made 32 saves for the Sabres, losers of six in a row and mired in last place in the Eastern Conference.

Skapski stopped Tyler Ennis with his mask on a breakaway 6:16 into the first period after the Sabres center got separation from the Rangers' Marc Staal.

"Approaching the game, I'd only played 60 minutes in the NHL so I was a little bit nervous," Skapski said. "That breakaway save in the first period kind of settled me down and I had a quick break in the second period where it was a 2-on-1 play and that propelled me through the rest of the game."

Early on, Lindback appeared shaky in the Sabres' crease, but managed to make a number of off-kilter saves — including one on a high wrister by Mats Zuccarello.

"(Lindback) played a great game in net, made some great saves," Ennis said. "We played solid tonight. I think if our power play could've gotten one, it would've been a different story."

Rangers defenseman Ryan McDonagh keyed an end-to-end rush that culminated in a 2-on-1 chance and a penalty to Sabres defenseman Andrej Meszaros. The Rangers hit two goal posts on the ensuing power play.

Skapski slid across to glove a wide-open and high one-timer from Brian Gionta early in the second. Moments later, he stopped Matt Moulson's point-blank wrist shot.

"His only two NHL wins are against us; his only two NHL games are against us," said Sabres defenseman Mike Weber. "I mean, we tried to come at him a little bit harder than our last outing at home against them."

A three-player combination play with McDonagh, Kevin Hayes and J.T. Miller almost put the Rangers on the board, but Miller's low shot slid wide of the goal. Soon after, Dominic Moore had a short-handed chance and his back-hander shot was turned away by Lindback.

St. Louis appeared to have Lindback beaten off a pass from Matt Hunwick, but the prone Sabres goaltender kicked out his left pad, diverting the shot off his left post.

"We had quite a few chances to score," Staal said. "But their goalie played well, made some big saves for them."

The Rangers earned an early third-period power play when Phil Varone went in the box for tripping, but Lindback made a trio of saves to keep the game scoreless.

NOTES: Lindback played in his 100th NHL game. ... Sabres D Zach Bogosian was scratched from the lineup.

Capitals-Sabres preview

By Jack Cassidy
Associated Press
March 15, 2015

With several teams chasing them, the Washington Capitals got a much-needed win to improve their standing in the Eastern Conference.

The Capitals, who now own the first wild-card spot, can't afford to get comfortable Monday night against the NHL-worst Buffalo Sabres.

Washington (37-23-10) entered Sunday's matchup in a tie with Boston before moving two points ahead of the Bruins with a 2-0 win. Braden Holtby had 32 saves in a victory that could prove crucial with both Ottawa and Florida within six points of a playoff spot.

"We played a good game overall, for 60 minutes tonight," Nicklas Backstrom told the Capitals' official website. "That's our key to win. That was playoff hockey, right there. You play a really good team out there today, and that's how the playoff game is going to be, so you have to get used to it if you want to play in the playoffs."

While it may be easy for the Capitals to overlook Buffalo (19-43-6) - which has dropped six straight, including a 6-1 loss in Washington on March 7 - the Sabres took a 2-1 victory in the first meeting Nov. 22.

"They are a good team that works hard, and we can't take them lightly, regardless of their record," Mike Green said of the Sabres earlier this month.

Buffalo (19-43-6) has managed only eight non-shootout wins since beating the Capitals and is the league's worst offensive team and second-worst on defense. With an average of 1.79 goals versus 3.32 allowed, the Sabres' minus-1.53 differential is the worst since the 1999-00 Atlanta Thrashers posted a minus-1.74.

They increased that margin with a 2-0 loss to the New York Rangers on Saturday.

"We've got to make improvements on supporting each other," captain Brian Gionta told the team's official website. "And I'd like to see a little more coming in through the neutral zone offensively, being able to support each other and get something going there."

Washington had also been stumbling, going 3-6-0 from Feb. 22-March 13, but a 4-2 loss to Dallas on Friday inspired a players-only meeting that sparked an immediate result.

"I think this shows that there is good leadership in the room," coach Barry Trotz said. "They helped make it happen. It was a great response ... They had a lot of urgency, a lot of detail, a lot of commitment."

Backstrom picked up two more assists and leads the league with 53. He is tied with teammate Alex Ovechkin and Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby with 71 points, trailing only the New York Islanders' John Tavares (72).

Ovechkin has failed to score in his last two games, matching his longest drought since Dec. 20, but scored one of his NHL-leading 45 goals in this month's win over the Sabres. He has four goals in his last four trips to Buffalo.

Holtby, whose shutout Sunday was his eighth this season, has started Washington's last 13 games. Justin Peters replaced Holtby after he was pulled in the second period Friday, but he owns a 3.38 goals-against average and has not started since Feb. 15.

Buffalo's Matt Hackett has a 5.19 GAA in two starts this season, and surrendered four goals to Washington on March 7.

Anders Lindback has a career-worst 3.36 GAA this season, but touts a solid .925 save percentage in five games since joining the Sabres from Dallas on Feb. 11.

Sabres, Lindback battle Rangers, but get shut out

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 14, 2015

During a lost season, fans search for anything positive. The draft watchers have Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel to make them smile, but the Buffalo backers who care about the day-to-day doings and repeatedly trek to First Niagara Center have had little reason to be happy.

Saturday was a good day for both sides of the tank.

After watching the home club get overwhelmed by superior opponents most nights, Sabres fans saw their team put forth an inspired effort against a legitimate Stanley Cup contender. Ultimately, it wasn't enough as the New York Rangers earned a 2-0 victory. But the Sabres played one of the NHL's best to a scoreless tie through 47 minutes, long enough for them to leave the rink with their heads up.

"I don't really believe in moral victories, but I thought we played as best as we could," defenseman Mike Weber said.

The Sabres knew they needed to be at their best. The Rangers outscored Buffalo, 9-2, during the first two meetings. Though New York added just two to their season total (including one into an empty net), Buffalo failed to add any. It was the 11th time the Sabres have been shut out, most in a single season in their history.

"We did a lot of good things, but at the same time we've got to find ways to get goals," captain Brian Gionta said.

An influx of Rangers fans brought attendance to the sellout total of 19,070, and they finally exploded with 12:39 to go. Keith Yandle's point shot went through traffic into the net.

The goal made Anders Lindback a hard-luck loser. He made 31 saves in his fifth straight appearance. Since being acquired at the trade deadline, Lindback has stopped 148 of 160 shots for a .925 save percentage.

"The more I play the more comfortable the game becomes, but I've got to find a way to win," said Lindback, who fell to 0-3-1 with the Sabres and 2-11-1 this season.

Lindback arrived in Buffalo with the 78th-ranked save percentage in the NHL, a paltry .875. While looking to prove he should stay in the NHL, the 26-year-old has turned his game around.

"He's really worked on parts of his game that needs to be worked on," said Sabres coach Ted Nolan, who praised the teaching of goalie coach Arturs Irbe. "I think Irbe has done a tremendous job with all our goaltenders this year, especially Anders since he's been here. It's a progression of watching him get better almost every day. It's nice to see."

Lindback made his best stop with 8:15 left in the second. Quick passing by the Rangers resulted in Martin St. Louis skating all alone on the goalie. Lindback stayed with the sniper, stretched out his 6-foot-6 frame and forced St. Louis to his backhand. The shot glanced off Lindback's skate, hit the post and bounced away as the fans roared in approval.

"I just tried to extend, and I'm lucky he didn't score," said Lindback, who played with St. Louis in Tampa Bay. "He's scored a lot of goals on me in practice like that."

The Sabres' lack of offense (20 shots) gave Rangers goalie Mackenzie Skapski his first NHL shutout in his second appearance. His only other game was a 3-1 victory Feb. 20 in Buffalo.

"He played well," Gionta said. "It's on us to be better."

Zach Bogosian missed his first game with the Sabres since being acquired last month. Nolan said the defenseman tweaked his lower body and was scratched as a precaution.

"He should hopefully be back next game," said the coach, whose team hosts Washington on Monday to start a busy four-game week.

Bogosian has been skating between 20 and 32 minutes per night with Buffalo, so his absence left plenty of ice time to be made up. The top pair of Rasmus Ristolainen (career-high 28:36) and Mike Weber (24:53) did most of the work.

"That's a good hockey team," Weber said of the Rangers. "That's a fast hockey team over there. All four lines can move. All four lines are pretty physical, too. We played our best."

Sabres notebook: Schaller knows the drill for college free agents

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 14, 2015

The end of college hockey season kicks off the signing of college free agents. The Sabres' Tim Schaller remembers the time well.

Buffalo plucked Schaller from the undrafted ranks two years ago following his senior season at Providence College.

"It's stressful in the sense that you're in playoffs, but you're also excited to see what the future brings for you," Schaller said Saturday before a 2-0 loss to the New York Rangers.

Buffalo, which signed defenseman Chad Ruhwedel along with Schaller in 2013, could be busy again this spring. The first name to watch is Casey Bailey, a junior forward at Penn State. The 23-year-old, who played his home games in Pegula Ice Arena, had 22 goals and 40 points through 35 games to enter the conversation for a few NHL teams.

Given the ties that Sabres owner Terry Pegula has to Penn State, it would make sense for the Sabres to have an inside track.

One of the top college free agents plays a position of need for Buffalo. Goaltender Matt O'Connor entered Saturday with a 19-3-4 record and .926 save percentage for Jack Eichel-led Boston University. O'Connor is a 6-foot-5 junior.

Other college players available include defenseman Oleg Yevenko (Massachusetts) and forwards Kyle Baun (Colgate), Drake Caggiula (North Dakota) and Austin Czarnik (Miami, Ohio).

Though the college players are trying to finish strong for their teams, they know scouts are watching. Schaller would get a heads-up from Providence coach Nate Leaman.

"He was the one who would talk to teams," Schaller said in First Niagara Center. "He didn't want to fill my head with guys in the building, but he would give you a hint with a tap on the shoulder and be like, 'Hey, someone's here for you. Play well.'"

"Head coaches do their part pretty well in letting you know but at the same time not letting you know too much."

The top players attract interest from multiple teams, so they rely on their agent and their own observations to determine which organization would be the best to join.

"Whether you're going to be a top-line guy or a bottom-line guy, it's what teams have at each skill set," Schaller said. "If there's a lot of prospects, maybe you want to go someplace else."

"You've got agents to do that for you so you can just worry about your game, but you're always interested. It's one of those things where if you're hanging around at night you'll look at a couple rosters."

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While recovering from surgery to repair his anterior cruciate ligament, Patrick Kaleta noticed he couldn't straighten or bend his knee completely. When the Sabres right winger stuck the leg out, it would shake uncontrollably.

Last month, doctors found a bone chip in the knee and removed it. He feels better than he has all year, and he's already skating better.

"The way it looks in the video and stuff that we've done, my stride and my tracking in my knee is better than it was when I was playing," Kaleta said after practicing with his teammates for the first time since mid-February. "It's just a matter of getting the strength back and the movement back."

Kaleta is striving to return to the lineup before the season ends April 11. The original timeline was four to six weeks.

"It's hard keeping me away from playing with this team," Kaleta said. "I could have easily packed it up and took my time with it, but I'm raring to get back."

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Coach Ted Nolan got a chance to catch up with one of his greatest success stories. While coaching Moncton of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League in 2005, Nolan recruited Keith Yandle. The blue-liner was named the Canadian Hockey League Defenseman of the Year during his only junior season.

New York acquired Yandle from Arizona at the trade deadline.

"When you're going to compete for the Stanley Cup, that's the type of people that you add," Nolan said. "The Rangers are certainly better with him in the lineup. They've got enough even without him."

Irbe brings out the best in Sabres' goaltenders

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 15, 2015

Following the Sabres' last game, Ted Nolan went to Arturs Irbe and told him what a tremendous job he's done with Buffalo's goaltenders. The kudos were well-deserved. If the NHL handed out awards to the top assistant coaches, Irbe would be in the running.

Though Buffalo's goalies don't have many wins heading into Monday's home game against Washington, the losses have rarely been their fault. Irbe deserves much of the credit.

The 48-year-old goalie coach turned question marks Jhonas Enroth and Michal Neuvirth into tradable assets, and he's helped transform Anders Lindback from a guy who couldn't stop anything into a formidable opponent.

"He's doing a tremendous job with all the goaltenders this year," Nolan said. "Lindback is no different. You just see the progression of him getting better and better and better. His confidence is really coming. Between Lindback's work ethic and Arturs' teaching, I think he's doing a tremendous job."

The insightful and personable Irbe declined an interview Saturday night following a 2-0 loss to the Rangers. The Sabres took Sunday off to rest for a busy week. After hosting Alex Ovechkin and the Capitals, they'll fly to Boston to visit the Bruins on Tuesday. The Sabres have back-to-back games Friday and Saturday, too, as part of six games in 10 days.

Lindback has quickly shown he'll be ready. He arrived in Buffalo at the trade deadline with a limited future. The pending unrestricted free agent had an .875 save percentage with Dallas, a total that ranked 78th in the NHL. He had just an .891 last year with Tampa Bay.

In five appearances with the Sabres, Lindback has stopped 148 of 160 shots for a .925 save percentage. Irbe's teaching has helped the 26-year-old put up the impressive number.

"He's been really good," Lindback said. "Obviously, he played so many years. He knows what it's about it and he knows the situation.

"It's so little time here so you can't do any major changes, but he's just been there and we try to work on basics and get the fundamentals in. He's really precise with paying attention to details every day and stay sharp at anytime. He's on me right away if I don't. So far it's been really good."

Though it's a small sample size, Lindback, Enroth and Neuvirth have been at their best with Irbe nearby. Enroth had a .903 save percentage in Buffalo, but he's at just .873 through seven appearances in Dallas. Neuvirth had a .918 with the Sabres, but he's at .889 after three trips to the New York Islanders' crease.

"You've got to look at that, for sure," Sabres captain Brian Gionta said of Irbe's influence. "Guys have improved and played well for us."

It's not a one-year trend. Irbe was Washington's goalie coach from 2009 to 2011, and Neuvirth's save percentage was .914 during both seasons. After Irbe left, it dropped to .902.

Washington ranked seventh in fewest goals allowed during Irbe's final season. Semyon Varlamov ranked sixth in the NHL with a .924 save percentage. Though Braden Holtby didn't play enough to qualify, his .934 would have ranked second.

Irbe left the Capitals because he didn't see a path to rise from goalie coach to full-fledged assistant. He went home to Latvia, where he met Nolan and began working under him on the country's national team.

Latvia became an underdog story during the 2014 Olympics after Edgars Masalskis recorded a .946 save percentage. Nolan has even fonder memories of Irbe's work with Kristers Gudlevskis, who had a .920 save percentage as a 20-year-old Olympian.

"I've seen him do miracles with the young kid drafted by Tampa Bay playing in Syracuse," Nolan said. "This kid came from a Junior B level of hockey. ... To face the shooters we did there, I thought he was tremendous.

"I just watched the progression of Kristers from the month that we had to work with him. It was incredible. Arturs does a good job."

Skapski shutout, Yandle goal help Rangers top Sabres

By Joe Yerdon

NHL.com

March 14, 2015

BUFFALO -- New York Rangers goalie Mackenzie Skapski will have a lot of good memories when it comes to playing in Buffalo.

Skapski made 20 saves and Keith Yandle scored 7:31 into the third period to give the Rangers a 2-0 win against the Buffalo Sabres at First Niagara Center on Saturday.

"It all started with the first one and now tonight, I don't think you could script it any better," Skapski said. "Our defense and our forwards were excellent as always. We have a very underrated offensive-defensive team. That's what makes us the best team in the NHL right now."

Skapski earned his first NHL shutout in his second start. He got his first victory against the Sabres in his NHL debut when he made 24 saves in a 3-1 win on Feb. 20.

"I didn't even digest the win yet, let alone the shutout," Skapski said. "Come summertime when hockey season's done and there's less of a process going on, I'll start to realize what happened. I'm fortunate with the opportunities they had."

Skapski made two big saves early on that kept the game scoreless. The 20-year-old rookie stopped Tyler Ennis on a breakaway 6:15 into the first period and made a sprawling glove save on Sabres captain Brian Gionta during a 2-on-1 with Philip Varone against Rangers defenseman Dan Girardi 1:02 into the second period.

"Early on in the game, they get a breakaway and he made a big save," Rangers defenseman Marc Staal said. "A couple big glove saves kept us right there. He gave us a chance to win the hockey game. It's good for him; it's a good milestone for a goalie. It's great he can get it early."

Skapski has won his two starts this season, each against the Sabres, and has a 119:46 shutout streak. He was recalled from Hartford in the American Hockey League on Feb. 4 to back up Cam Talbot when starting goalie Henrik Lundqvist sustained a vascular injury.

Skapski is the first Rangers goalie to have a shutout in one of his first two NHL starts since Marcel Paille in November 1957. It is the first time in Rangers history three goalies have a shutout in one season; Lundqvist and Talbot each has five.

"Both [Skapski] and Cam during the absence of [Lundqvist] have played well for us," Rangers coach Alain Vigneault said. "They're doing what goaltenders are supposed to go, give your team a chance to win."

The Rangers (43-17-7) won their fourth consecutive game to remain atop the Metropolitan Division and have won seven consecutive games against the Sabres. The Rangers have earned a point in 16 of the past 17 games going 13-1-3 during that time.

"We knew going in, and we talked about it prior to the game, there are no easy games in this league and we didn't expect one tonight," Vigneault said. "Their goaltender made some real big saves in the second period to keep them in, our goaltender had a couple big saves and [I] thought he did a real good job for us and we found a way in the third period to score a couple goals."

Yandle gave the Rangers a 1-0 lead with his fifth goal of the season and first since he was acquired in a trade from the Arizona Coyotes on March 1. Yandle received a pass from Martin St. Louis and took a wrist shot from high in the attacking zone that beat Sabres goalie Anders Lindback through a screen. It was Yandle's first goal since Dec. 23.

"I thought for a second that I didn't know if got tipped so maybe I shouldn't celebrate," Yandle said. "I don't really remember too much."

St. Louis scored his 20th of the season, an empty-net goal with 32.7 seconds remaining.

"[We're] getting ready for playoffs," Yandle said. "We've got to play those tight games and find ways to win and it doesn't matter if it's early in the game or late."

The Rangers had a 72-26 advantage in shot attempts against the Sabres.

"I'm not big moral victories; we still lost the game," Sabres defenseman Mike Weber said. "But I thought we played almost as [well] as we could."

The Sabres (19-43-6) have lost six consecutive games.

"I think it was a competitive game, I think we played pretty well," Ennis said. "I think [Lindback] played a great game in net, made some great saves. The penalty kill was good. We played solid tonight. I think if our power play could've gotten one, it would've been a different story."

Lindback made 31 saves in his fifth start for the Sabres since he was acquired in a trade from the Dallas Stars on Feb. 11.

"You can see the progression of him getting better and better and better, his confidence really coming," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said.

Sabres defenseman Zach Bogosian missed the game with a lower-body injury. He has averaged 26:44 of ice time since he was acquired in a trade from the Winnipeg Jets on Feb. 11.

"He tweaked just a little something this morning, lower body," Nolan said. "We thought maybe one game would be a lot worse than losing him for four or five. Hopefully, he'll be back next game."

Sabres try to snap slide vs. Capitals

NHL.com

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CAPITALS (37-23-10) at SABRES (19-43-6)

TV: NBCSN, SN1, CSN-DC+

Season series: The Washington Capitals and Buffalo Sabres split the first two games. Washington cruised to a 6-1 win against Buffalo at Verizon Center on March 7. Capitals forward Curtis Glencross had a goal and two assists.

Capitals team scope: Washington opens a three-game road trip after wrapping up a five-game homestand with a 2-0 win against the Boston Bruins on Sunday. Braden Holtby made 32 saves for his eighth shutout of the season and helped the Capitals end a three-game losing streak. Washington leads the Bruins by two points in the race for the first wild card for the Stanley Cup Playoffs from the Eastern Conference. "We played a good game overall, for 60 minutes tonight," center Nicklas Backstrom said. "That's our key to win. That was playoff hockey, right there. You play a really good team out there today, and that's how the playoff game is going to be, so you have to get used to it if you want to play in the playoffs."

Sabres team scope: Buffalo enters with a six-game losing streak (0-5-1). The Sabres have been shut out twice this month, including a 2-0 loss to the New York Rangers at First Niagara Center on Saturday. Defenseman Zach Bogosian missed the game because of a lower-body injury, but the Sabres are hopeful he'll be back in the lineup on Monday. Goalie Anders Lindback is likely to start; he has saved 148 of 160 shots since being acquired from the Dallas Stars at the NHL Trade Deadline. "He's really worked on parts of his game that needs to be worked on," said Sabres coach Ted Nolan, according to the Buffalo News. "I think [Sabres goalie coach Arturs] Irbe has done a tremendous job with all our goaltenders this year, especially Anders since he's been here. It's a progression of watching him get better almost every day. It's nice to see."

Sabres lose again, get blanked by Rangers goalie Mackenzie Skapski

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
March 14, 2015

BUFFALO – These days, as the Sabres' awful season mercifully winds down, their efforts have remained strong.

Sure, they're badly outmatched every game. But tenacity and strong goaltending has leveled things out a bit, keeping them in some contests.

"We can't ask for much more," coach Ted Nolan said Saturday following the Sabres' 2-0 loss to the New York Rangers, their sixth straight defeat.

Well, scoring a goal would help now and then.

They hung with the slick Rangers, dodging bullets all night against the Eastern Conference powerhouse. Still, they couldn't exploit rookie goalie Mackenzie Skapski, who made 20 saves for his first NHL shutout.

Eventually, Rangers defenseman Keith Yandle scored 7:31 into the third period, generating a loud roar from the bipartisan capacity crowd of 19,070 fans inside the First Niagara Center.

Skapski has played two NHL games, both wins against the Sabres. The 20-year-old allowed a goal 14 seconds into his NHL debut on Feb. 20, a 3-1 Rangers win here.

So Skapski, Cam Talbot's backup as star goalie Henrik Lundqvist recovers from a neck injury, has a shutout streak of 119 minutes, 46 seconds against the Sabres.

"It all started with the first one," Skapski said, "and now tonight I don't think you could script it any better. Our defense and our forwards were excellent as always."

Naturally, the Sabres wanted to exploit Skapski, who made 24 saves in his only previous outing.

"Obviously, that was the game plan coming in," Sabres defenseman Mike Weber said. "His only two NHL wins are against us, his only two NHL games are against us. I mean, we tried to come at him a little bit harder than our last outing at home against them."

The Sabres did that, generating some strong opportunities early. Skapski stopped Tyler Ennis' first-period breakaway with his mask as Rangers defenseman Marc Staal hectored the Sabres' top scorer.

Nolan said Ennis should've been awarded a penalty shot. Ennis said the play was clean.

"He got whacked four times," Nolan said. "But when you're in our position, you don't get quite the calls you like, either. We had our chances."

Martin St. Louis' empty-net goal sealed the game late.

The Sabres wasted another strong outing from goalie Anders Lindback. In his fifth straight appearance and 100th NHL game, the Swede looked sharp again, stopping 31 shots.

"You can see the progression of him getting better and better and better, his confidence really coming," Nolan said.

But Lindback still hasn't won a game since the Sabres acquired him from Dallas last month.

"Obviously, it's frustrating," Lindback said. "We just have to keep plugging."

The Sabres made one lineup change, scratching defenseman Zach Bogosian, their top minute-muncher.

"He tweaked just a little something this morning, lower body," Nolan said. "We thought maybe one game would be (better) than losing him for four or five. Hopefully, he'll be back next game."

Andre Benoit replaced Bogosian.

Sabres' Nick Deslauriers showcasing toughness, fighting skills

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
March 14, 2015

BUFFALO – Off the ice, rookie Nick Deslauriers usually has a smile etched on his face. The affable Sabres winger can often be found joking and laughing with his teammates in the dressing room.

"He's always got something to say, always joking around with the boys," defenseman Mike Weber said Saturday prior to the Sabres' 2-0 loss to the New York Rangers inside the First Niagara Center.

But on the ice, the 6-foot-1, 209-pound Deslauriers possesses a fearsome edge. Just 85 games into his career, the 24-year-old has developed a reputation for his toughness and fighting skills.

"He can go," Weber said. "He's an angry little Frenchman sometimes. He's real tough, real strong. You can see the size of him. He's still relatively young, he's built like a man."

In a miserable season, Deslauriers, who played 17 games after being acquired late last year, has been one of the Sabres' biggest surprises and most dependable presences, playing a hard-nosed third- or fourth-line role.

Deslauriers has a team-high 217 hits and seven fights. He fought again Saturday, a ferocious scrap with Tanner Glass. He also has five goals and 14 points.

"Just 17 games last year was not a lot to prove myself," Deslauriers said. "I told myself that I just need to bring the hardworking type of guy I am every day and try to be in the lineup every game."

Incredibly, the gritty Deslauriers is the only Sabre to appear in all 68 games this season. He had a close call Feb. 24, when the flu nearly forced him to miss the Sabres' 4-2 win in Columbus.

"Knock on wood, I thought in Columbus, I had the little flu there, I was going to miss one," Deslauriers said. "(I) came back from the death there, had a good nap."

Playing hockey for a living might be a lot easier than the work Deslauriers experienced growing up in Quebec. His parents, Penny and Stephane, own a moving company. Watching them build it from the ground up taught Deslauriers some life lessons. So did helping out with some moves.

"I just became a hardworking guy just from looking up to my parents, just starting from almost nothing and building ourselves up when I was young," he said. "That's the type of family we are. We don't take what's for granted."

"Whatever we do, I think we're already lucky not to work from 8-4 every day. ... I just need to bring (the) hardworking guy all day."

But Deslauriers, who played defense until Los Angeles moved him up front early last season, has "got a lot of skills," Weber said.

"He's probably the most athletic guy I've ever played with, whether it's watching him play soccer or any sports he picks up around there, he's extremely, extremely athletic," Weber said. "He picks up everything pretty easily. He's an energy guy in the locker room."

Sabres coach Ted Nolan believes Deslauriers "brings that certain energy every game."

"He hits a lot," Nolan said. "I think guys are aware when they pass the puck, Nick's going to finish the hit. I think that's how they could be aware of Nick."

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These days, oft-injured Sabres winger Patrick Kaleta feels "like a new man" after undergoing surgery last month to remove a bone chip from his knee.

The chip – Kaleta said it's like having a rock in your shoe – hampered the 28-year-old all season, he said Saturday morning. He couldn't straighten his knee or bend it all the way. Still, he kept playing with it and planned to get it cleaned out after the season.

"There's nothing I could do," Kaleta said about the injury after skating with his teammates for the first time in weeks. "There was not a specific time that it happened. It just happens maybe as a result from the ACL surgery."

Injuries have ravaged Kaleta in the last two seasons. He tore his ACL last season. In one of his first appearances back, a slap shot essentially broke his face Sept. 28. He finally made his regular-season debut Nov. 13.

"I've been proud of the way I've been able to come back from the injuries I have," Kaleta said.

When Kaleta had surgery a month ago, the Sabres said he would be out four to six weeks.

"Four to six is a number," Kaleta said. "Hopefully, I'm back on the sooner part rather than the later."

Nolan added: "It's always good to see Patty. He brings that boyish enthusiasm to the game, which is contagious."

Struggling Sabres could win some games down the stretch

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
March 15, 2015

BUFFALO – At this point, it's a fair question to ask. Given the Sabres' sorry state – they're on a 0-5-1 run with AHL players filling out the NHL's weakest roster following the trade deadline – can they win again this season?

A few more losses could cement 30th place and secure the rights to draft either Connor McDavid or Jack Eichel, the mega-prospects the Sabres covet so dearly.

The Sabres have 14 games left in their miserable campaign, starting with tonight's tilt against the Washington Capitals inside the First Niagara Center.

They play six games against teams currently in a playoff spot – Washington, the Boston Bruins, Nashville Predators, Chicago Blackhawks, New York Islanders and Pittsburgh Penguins.

The Sabres are 2-6-3 against those teams this season. They beat Washington 1-0 on Nov. 22 and the Isles 4-3 in a shootout Dec. 27, their last victory before an epic 14-game losing streak.

Of course, while there are no easy games for the NHL's worst outfit, they have some lighter opponents.

In addition to the Dallas Stars, Colorado Avalanche and Columbus Blue Jackets, the Sabres face some real dregs – the New Jersey Devils, Toronto Maple Leafs, Arizona Coyotes (twice) and Carolina Hurricanes – down the stretch.

They're 4-5-2 against those weak clubs this season.

Realistically, the Sabres, who have five wins this *calendar year*, should triumph again this season.

The hapless Leafs, despite Wednesday's 4-3 shootout win against the Sabres, appear to have quit on the season. The Coyotes, a club heavily influenced by former Sabres general manager and tank-master Darcy Regier, their senior vice president and assistant GM, have sold off almost all their assets.

The contests against the Coyotes (28th overall) on March 26 and 30 could heavily influence or even decide which team finishes 30th.

But forget about the Sabres' opponents for a moment. Sooner or later, a strong effort – players have kept giving what they have throughout all the upheaval and losing, coach Ted Nolan has said repeatedly – might pay off. It almost did Saturday, when they hung with the New York Rangers before falling 2-0.

Some strong goaltending, their greatest strength, should also pay some dividends.

Since taking over when the Sabres dealt Michal Neuvirth to the Isles, newcomer Anders Lindback has performed strongly, posting a .925 save percentage in five appearances. The Swede is 0-3-1, though.

The Sabres are 19-43-6 and have a downright stunning minus-101 goal differential with Lindback, Neuvirth and Jhonas Enroth playing well in front of a barrage of shots most games. Sabres goalies have a .906 save percentage (23rd overall) but have faced a league-high 35.4 shots a game.

Where would they be without their goaltending? Would they even have 10 wins?

Nolan credits goalie coach Arturs Irbe, a former NHL All-Star, for the successful netminding.

"He's doing a tremendous job with all the goaltenders this year," said Nolan, who hired Irbe in the summer. "I thought Lindback is no different. You can see the progression of him getting better and better and better and his confidence really coming. Between Lindback's work ethic and Arturs' teaching, I think he's doing a tremendous job."

Nolan saw Irbe's influence on goalie Kristers Gudlevskis up close coaching Latvia at the Olympics last year, when the raw, untested youngster nearly upset the mighty Canadians, making 55 saves in a 2-1 loss.

"I've seen him do miracles with (Gudlevskis)," Nolan said. "I mean, this kid came from junior-B level of hockey. I think he had about 10 minutes of pro hockey experience going into the Olympics and facing the shooters we did there. I thought he was tremendous. I just watched the progression of Kristers from a month that we had to work with him was incredible."

Lindback was considered to be little more than a body when the Sabres acquired him from Dallas on Feb. 11 in the Enroth deal. The 26-year-old's numbers then made him perhaps the league's worst backup. Now, Nolan might ride him the rest of the season.

"I feel OK out there," Lindback said. "Obviously, the more I play, the more comfortable the game becomes."

Notes: The Sabres had Sunday off. They also play Tuesday in Boston. ... Capitals superstar Alex Ovechkin has 23 goals and 38 points in 35 career games against the Sabres. ... The Sabres closed last season 3-17-2.

Skapski, Rangers top Sabres, 2-0

By Dan Cave

WGR 550

March 14, 2015

Both of Mackenzie Skapski's NHL starts have come against the Sabres and both have been wins. Skapski stopped 20 shots for his first career shutout. He hasn't allowed a goal since Matt Moulson beat him 14 seconds into the teams' previous matchup.

Both the Sabres and Rangers went more than two full periods without a goal, but not for lack of trying. Skapski stoned Tyler Ennis on a first period breakaway chance, and then robbed Brian Gionta up close with a pad save. Gionta one-timed a 2-on-1 pass from Phil Varone, but the New York netminder stretched across the crease to stuff the Sabres captain.

At the other end, Anders Lindback kept the Rangers out of the net through the first 40 minutes, but got some help from the post.

New York rang four shots off the iron, including two on the same power play, before finally breaking through at 7:31 of the third period. Keith Yandle's blue line blast made its way through traffic and behind Lindback for the 1-0 Rangers lead. Martin St. Louis added a late empty-netter to seal the win.

The Sabres are now winless in six straight with another home game coming up Monday against the Washington Capitals. Hear the call at 7 p.m. on WGR 550 and the Buffalo Sabres Radio Network.

1st Period

Goals

None

Penalties

14:50 - BUF - Andrej Meszaros (2 min., hooking)

2nd Period

Goals

None

Penalties

1:17 - NYR - Derick Brassard (2 min., roughing)

8:12 - NYR - Matt Hunwick (2 min., hooking)

17:20 - BUF - Nicolas Deslauriers (5 min., fighting)

17:20 - NYR - Tanner Glass (5 min., fighting)

3rd Period

Goals

7:31 - NYR - Keith Yandle (5) (Martin St. Louis, Chris Kreider)

19:27 - NYR - Martin St. Louis (20) (EN) (Unassisted)

Penalties

0:26 - BUF - Phil Varone (2 min., tripping)

4:59 - NYR - J.T. Miller (2 min., hooking)

15:33 - BUF - Nikita Zadorov (2 min., hooking)

Goaltending

NYR - Mackenzie Skapski (20 saves, 20 shots)

BUF - Anders Lindback (31 saves, 32 shots)

Penalties

NYR - 0 of 3

BUF - 0 of 3

Three Stars

1.) NYR - Keith Yandle (1 G, 0 A)

2.) NYR - Mackenzie Skapski (20 saves)

3.) BUF - Anders Lindback (31 saves)

Hamilton: Sabres have the energy, but not the touch

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 14, 2015

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Sabres starting giving up chances as the game rolled on, but the Rangers hit posts and shot wide before finally breaking through in the third.

Marty St. Louis came storming in from the left circle and deked to the backhand. Anders Lindback used his 6'6 frame and got the left pad out forcing St. Louis to lift the puck and hit the post.

"Caught him a little late there and just tried to extend," said Lindback about his former Tampa Bay teammate. "I was lucky he didn't score. He's scored a lot of goals on me in practice earlier."

Buffalo tried to slow the Rangers down by putting four guys in lanes and disrupting the speed and passing. It worked very well in the first period, but the Rangers broke through in the second with almost twice as many shot attempts as Buffalo.

Mackenzie Skapski has only two starts in the NHL, both against Buffalo, and he stood tall once again. Phil Varone found Brian Gionta in the clear early in the second, but Skapski got across in a big hurry.

Tyler Ennis had a nice first period, but Marc Staal showed why he's one of the league's best defensive defenseman. Ennis got sprung on a breakaway pass only to have Staal hassle him with his stick without taking a penalty.

A few minutes later it looked like Ennis was gone, but Staal knocked it away at the last second.

Both goaltenders were hanging strong until Keith Yandle broke the scoreless tie with 12:29 left. He ripped a screen shot that went short side. Lindback never saw it. It was just the Rangers' 23rd shot of the game. St. Louis sealed it late with an empty-net goal.

Skapski stopped 20 shots, earning his first career shutout, while Lindback finished with 31 saves.

Overall I think the Sabres played as hard as they could, but this is one of the best teams in the National Hockey League in the Rangers. There's no way anybody can question their heart or effort in this game.

"I want to win," said Lindback. "I feel okay, I feel good out there. But obviously, the more I play, the more comfortable the game becomes. Gotta find a way to win."

Sabres, Oilers, Coyotes all doing their best to finish 30th

By Howard Simon

WGR 550

March 15, 2015

And down the stretch they come!!! The Buffalo Sabres, Edmonton Oilers and Arizona Coyotes are doing some serious losing as they fight tooth and nail for the 30th place finish and guaranteed top two pick in the 2015 draft.

Here's a look at the ugly details starting with the Sabres.

Buffalo is 0-5-1 in its last six games. An offense that was already anemic, became even worse after the trade deadline. The Sabres have scored just six goals in the five games since the deadline day moves by General Manager Tim Murray.

The offense isn't getting a boost from the power play which is 1 for its last 29 over the last 12 games. Buffalo is 3-9-3 in its last 15 games and they have managed just two regulation wins since February 7th.

Edmonton is 0-5-2 in their last seven games and 1-7-2 in the last 10. The Oilers last win was back on February 24th and they have only one regulation victory since February 9th. Edmonton's problem isn't offense, its the defense and goaltending. The Oilers have given up 29 goals in their last six games.

Arizona opens the week in 28th place but the Coyotes are making a real strong run at 30th. The Coyotes have lost four straight and have produced a measly six goals in six games since the trade deadline when they dealt their top two point producers.

The Coyotes are 2-14-2 in their last 18 games and both wins came via shootout. Arizona hasn't won a game in regulation since February 3rd which is almost six weeks ago. The Coyotes offense is giving the Sabres a run for the title of worst in the NHL. Arizona has scored two or fewer goals in 17 of their last 18 games. The power play is 3 for its last 30.

Here are the standings going into the week:

30) Buffalo 44 points/14 games remaining
29) Edmonton 48 points/13 games remaining
28) Arizona 50 points/13 games remaining

In terms of tiebreakers, Arizona has 16 regulation/overtime wins while Edmonton has 13 and the Sabres have 12. In the goals for/against differential, Buffalo leads the way at -101. Arizona is next at -85 and Edmonton is -78.

Here is this week's schedule for each of the teams:

Sabres: Monday vs Washington, Tuesday at Boston, Friday vs New Jersey, Saturday at Nashville

Oilers: Monday vs Toronto, Wednesday vs Columbus, Saturday vs Philadelphia

Coyotes: Monday at Los Angeles, Thursday vs Colorado, Saturday vs Pittsburgh, Sunday vs Vancouver

Six of the Sabres final 14 games are against teams that are currently in a playoff spot. Edmonton faces just four teams currently in and Arizona will meet seven.

****Jack Eichel update****

He scored two goals and added four assists in two games over the weekend as Boston University swept its quarterfinal playoff series with Merrimack. The Terriers will next play in the semifinals on Friday. Eichel, who has a 10 game point scoring streak, now has 20 goals and 61 points in 34 games. He's the first Boston University player to reach the 60 point mark in a season since former Sabre Chris Drury.

Skapski carries Rangers to shutout win over Sabres

By Mark Ludwiczak
The Sports Xchange
March 14, 2015

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- Unlike his first career start against the Buffalo Sabres, New York Rangers goalie Mackenzie Skapski came up with a big save on his first major test.

After that, it once again was smooth sailing.

The 20-year-old Skapski made 20 saves Saturday night in his second career start -- including a stop on a partial breakaway 6:15 into the game -- to lead the Rangers to a 2-0 victory Saturday night. It was his first NHL shutout.

"It all started with the first one and tonight I don't think you could script it any better," Skapski said. "Our defense and our forwards were excellent as always. We have a very underrated offensive defensive team. That's what makes us the best team in the NHL right now."

Defenseman Keith Yandle and right winger Martin St. Louis scored for the Rangers (43-17-7), who sit atop the NHL with 93 points through 67 games.

Both of Skapski's wins have come against the lowly Sabres, who fell to 19-43-6 with the loss. The goaltender has a shutout streak of 119:46 after surrendering a goal on his first shot in his win over Buffalo on Feb. 20.

The Rangers continue to cruise in the standings no matter who is in net. With star goaltender Henrik Lundqvist (vascular) injured, the Rangers have continued their success behind goalie Cam Talbot, who has started 17 of New York's past 19 games.

The Rangers ended a season-long five-game trip with a 4-0-1 record and have won 13 of their last 16 games. They have also won their last seven games against Buffalo.

"Both him and Cam during the absence of Hank have played well for us," Rangers head coach Alain Vigneault said. "They're doing what goaltenders are supposed to do, give your team a chance to win."

Buffalo's best chance came on a partial breakaway by center Tyler Ennis early in the first period. His backhand attempt was saved by Skapski, who stopped the puck with his mask.

Skapski also came up with a big save on Sabres captain Brian Gionta one minute into the second period, moving quickly from right to left to make a stop.

"I was pretty comfortable out there and pretty calm," Skapski said. "Those guys for the most part made it very easy on me. I only really had to make two or three big saves tonight that could've been turning points."

Goalie Anders Lindback was strong between the pipes for Buffalo (19-43-6) and made 31 saves in his 100th career game. But the Sabres were unable to find the back of the net on offense.

"You can't ask for much more," Sabres head coach Ted Nolan said. "One even-strength goal ... we had come good chances ... we were right there until the end."

Added Sabres defenseman Mike Weber: "I'm not big on moral victories, we still lost the game. But I thought we played almost as (well) as we could."

Yandle's winning goal came with 12:29 left on a long shot from the point that made its way through traffic in front of the net to give the defenseman his first goal as a Ranger. He was traded from Arizona to New York on March 1.

"Getting ready for playoffs," Yandle said. "We've gotta play those tight games and find ways to win and it doesn't

matter if it's early in the game or late."

St. Louis added an empty-net goal with 32.7 seconds remaining.

There was no score through two periods, but not for a lack of chances. Both teams played with speed and pace and put together an entertaining performance on both ends of the ice.

New York had several clear chances in the second period but was unable to break the early deadlock.

Rangers right winger Mats Zuccarello came close on an odd-man rush five minutes into the period, but Lindback held strong with a glove save. Left winger Rick Nash had a clear chance on another odd-man rush with nine minutes remaining in the second but lifted the puck high above the net.

NOTES: D Zach Bogosian and G Chad Johnson were scratched for the Sabres. ... D Kevin Klein (upper body) and C James Sheppard were scratched for the Rangers. Klein is expected to miss three-to-four weeks after suffering an injury late in Wednesday's 3-1 win over the Washington Capitals. In 65 games, Klein has nine goals, 17 assists and is a plus-24. ... This was the third and final meeting between the Sabres and Rangers this season. New York won each of its first two games this year against Buffalo, including a 3-1 win on Feb. 20 in Buffalo.

Sabres look to slow down speedy Rangers

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 14, 2015

The Buffalo Sabres and New York Rangers will meet for the third and final time this season Saturday night at First Niagara Center. The Rangers have won both contests so far and the Sabres will look to slow them down.

Both teams have been off since Wednesday as Buffalo was able to collect a point in a 4-3 shootout loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs while the Rangers defeated the Capitals 3-1 in Washington.

Rick Nash and his 39 goals have helped the Rangers to the top of the Eastern Conference standings. What does Sabres alternate captain Mike Weber see as New York's biggest strengths?

"Probably their speed, their relentlessness on the puck, also," he said after Buffalo's morning skate. "Their forecheck there, they're coming in with a purpose and they want the puck and they're going to take it to the net. Obviously they have their big guns there and Nash is having a heck of a year. They cause a lot of problems."

Sabres coach Ted Nolan stressed the need for his team to stay on its toes and make smart decisions both with and without the puck. A lapse against the Rangers could result in a goal against pretty quickly.

"They didn't go to the Stanley Cup Final last year by accident," Nolan said. "They're a very talented team and if you have any kind of turnovers with them or try to create any turnovers with them, you've got to be quicker, you've got to be faster and you've got to be more alert. All those things, almost like the orange alert. We've got to be alert."

LINDBACK GETS THE NOD

Anders Lindback will make his fifth-straight appearance and fourth start for the Sabres.

He's played well for Buffalo in those games despite still looking for his first win with the franchise. Nolan credited goaltending coach Arturs Irbe for helping Lindback get back to form.

"He's really worked on the parts of his game that need to be worked on and I think Irbe has done a tremendous job with all of our goaltenders this year – and especially Anders," Nolan said. "Since Anders has been here, it's been a progression of watching him get better almost every day so it's nice to see."

Mackenzie Skapski is expected to start for New York. He made his first NHL start back on Feb. 20, a 3-1 win against Buffalo. He hasn't played since as Cam Talbot has taken the reigns for the injured Henrik Lundqvist.

KALETA BACK ON THE ICE

Patrick Kaleta was on the ice with the team for the first time since undergoing surgery in mid-February to remove a bone chip from his knee. The bone chip had limited his ability to bend his knee and affected his skating stride.

"Once they got that out of there, I felt like a new man the next day, pretty much, and I could straighten my leg and all that stuff," he said.

Removing the bone chip is just the latest setback and he's hopeful he can return to the lineup within the next few weeks.

Kaleta has overcome a lot of adversity when it comes to injuries – over the past two seasons, especially. After tearing his ACL last November, he worked hard to return for the start of training camp only to take a slap shot to the face during the preseason.

Surgery was required to repair the broken bones on the right side of his face and he missed the first 17 games of the season recovering.

“You can look at a lot of things and get negatives out of them. I’m pretty proud of myself, the way I’ve come back from the injuries I have,” he said. “Not a lot of people understand the things I had to go through and I could’ve easily packed it up and took my time with it, but I’m raring to get back. I’d do anything for this team day in and day out.”

Nolan is happy to see Kaleta inching closer to a return.

“It’s always good to see Patty. He brings that boyish enthusiasm to the game, which is contagious and it’s good to have him around,” Nolan said.

PROJECTED LINEUP

26 Matt Moulson – 22 Johan Larsson – 63 Tyler Ennis
82 Marcus Foligno – 84 Philip Varone – 12 Brian Gionta
44 Nicolas Deslauriers – 59 Tim Schaller – 19 Cody Hodgson
49 Jerry D’Amigo – 37 Matt Ellis – 20 Zac Dalpe

All seven Sabres defensemen took the morning skate, but Nolan would not announce which player would be sitting out against New York. He said they’d wait to see how one player, who is dealing with either an injury or illness feels, but he didn’t elaborate any further.

35 Anders Lindback
31 Matt Hackett

Sabres unable to hang in against Rangers in tight game

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 14, 2015

The Buffalo Sabres held on in a scoreless game against the top team in the Eastern Conference for a large chunk of the game on Saturday, but eventually, the New York Rangers found a way to put one in.

Through traffic, Rangers defenseman Keith Yandle rifled a shot past Sabres goaltender Anders Lindback 7:31 into the third period to break a scoreless tie. Martin St. Louis added an empty-net goal with 32.7 seconds remaining to give the Rangers a 2-0 victory at First Niagara Center.

Playing without defenseman Zach Bogosian, who is averaging a hefty 26:44 of ice time in his 12 games with the Sabres, due to a lower-body injury, the Sabres defense did all they could – for as long as they could – to contain the Rangers' offensive attack. Buffalo even made a few adjustments to try and slow New York down.

"We know last time playing them, they really took advantage with their intelligence and their speed," coach Ted Nolan said. "We tried to clog up the neutral zone a little bit better so they wouldn't have so much free-wheeling room to go. It seemed to work. They were right there right til the end."

Regarding Bogosian, Nolan said that he tweaked something Saturday morning and the coaching staff decided to sit him one game so he could heal completely instead of running the risk of losing him for a longer period of time if he had played. Bogosian could very well be ready for the team's next game on Monday.

However, offense isn't a huge part of Bogosian's game and what the Sabres really needed against the Rangers was to put the puck in the back of the net.

"For the most part, we did the things we wanted to do," captain Brian Gionta said. "But you've got to score some goals to win the game. Unfortunately we just didn't get enough there."

Gionta was also pleased with the effort and for a majority of the game, thought they handled the Rangers speed pretty well.

However, he'd like to see more out of his club when it comes to generating offense and he said it starts in their own zone with cleaner breakouts.

"We've got to make improvements on supporting each other," he said. "And I'd like to see a little more coming in through the neutral zone offensively, being able to support each other and get something going there."

STRONG IN NET

Lindback finished with 31 saves in what was his 100th career NHL game. However, he's still looking for his first win as a Sabre.

"I want to win. I feel OK; I feel good out there," he said. "Obviously the more I play the more comfortable the game becomes, but I've got to find a way to win."

Nolan has given a lot of credit to goaltending coach Arturs Irbe this season and Lindback is the latest to step in, work hard and reap the benefits of that work.

"[Irbe is] doing a tremendous job with all the goaltenders so far this year. Lindback is no different. You see the progression of him getting better and better and better and his confidence really coming," Nolan said. "Between Lindback's work ethic and Arturs' teaching, I think he's doing a tremendous job."

Lindback has had a steady stretch of games so far, having appeared in five-straight games and starting in four of them. He's feeling better with every game and was pretty pleased with the team's defensive efforts against the Rangers.

"It's been a couple in a row here we've lost. It's frustrating but we've just got to keep plugging," he said. "This is absolutely one of the best teams in the League and I thought we did well."

Strong goaltending has been a theme for the Sabres this season no matter who seems to be between the pipes and Lindback's teammates have taken notice of his recent play as well.

One of his best saves of the night came midway through the second period when he cut across the crease to stop St. Louis, deflecting the puck off his left pad, then off the post and out.

"Lindy played a great game in net. He made some big saves," Sabres forward Tyler Ennis said. "The penalty kill was good. I thought we played solid tonight. If our power play could've gotten one, it would be a different story. But a solid effort tonight."

SPECIAL TEAMS SUMMARY

The Sabres power play went 0-for-3 on the night and Ennis put a lot of the burden for their lack of production upon himself.

"We were saying what's been killing us lately was penalties, but tonight, what got us I think, was the power play," he said. "I wasn't good enough on it today and I think that's part of the difference."

On the flip side, Buffalo's penalty kill was strong as the Rangers went 0-for-3 on the man advantage and limited to New York to four shots.

UP NEXT

Buffalo will regroup and open the first half of a back-to-back slate of games on Monday at home against the Washington Capitals. They'll then leave after the game and head to Boston for a match Tuesday night against the Bruins.