



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*March 23, 2015*

## **Bernier has 100th career goal in Devils' 3-1 win over Sabres**

By John Wawrow

Associated Press

March 20, 2015

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The New Jersey Devils overcame a depleted lineup to stay on the fringes of the NHL playoff race.

Steve Bernier scored twice, including the 100th of his career, to make up for the absence of two of New Jersey's three leading scorers. And backup goalie Keith Kinkaid provided starter Cory Schneider a much-needed break by stopping 28 shots in a 3-1 win over the Buffalo Sabres on Friday night.

"Two great players out, everybody's got to do a little bit more," said Bernier, referring to the Devils missing Patrik Elias and Mike Cammalleri. Elias missed his third straight game because of back spasms, while Cammalleri was held out after coming down with an illness during the morning skate.

Bernier stepped up by snapping a 14-game goal drought by scoring less than five minutes apart in the second period to put the Devils up 2-0.

"It's been 14 games, but I thought we've been playing well," he said. "I never worry about that stuff, but it's always nice to get one out of the way."

Scott Gomez and Adam Henrique set up both of Bernier's goals in helping New Jersey improve to 3-0-1 in its past four. Jordin Tootoo also scored for the Devils (31-29-11), who inched up the Eastern Conference standings by moving into a tie for 11th with Philadelphia.

As for Kinkaid, his only lament was having a bid for his first career shutout come to an end with 8:19 remaining, when Matt Moulson scored a power-play goal.

"Time goes slow in the third period when you have the shutout," said Kinkaid, who stopped the first 27 shots he faced. "I just can't buy one."

The last-place Sabres (20-44-7) had a modest 1-0-1 streak snapped, and dropped to 1-6-2 in their past nine.

"It was a little too little too late," said Moulson of his goal, which came after Kinkaid stopped the initial two shots he faced. "We got a bunch of chances in the second and didn't capitalize. And they came down and capitalized on theirs."

Defensive breakdowns resulted in all three goals allowed by Buffalo.

Bernier opened the scoring nine minutes into the second period. Gomez started the play by driving up the left wing, drawing both Sabres defensemen — Tyson Strachan and Andre Benoit — with him. Gomez then fed a pass into the middle to a wide-open Bernier, who tapped the puck inside the right post before goalie Anders Lindback could get across.

Bernier scored again just under five minutes later. Henrique set him up this time by flipping a bad-angle shot into the crease from the left corner. Lindback had difficulty controlling the puck and Bernier shoveled it in while driving in front from behind the net.

And Tootoo made it 3-0 early in the third by out-muscling defenseman Mike Weber and shoveling the puck inside the right post.

Moulson credited the Devils' stifling defense for making it difficult to generate many scoring chances, even though Sabres had a 29-27 edge in shots.

"I don't think we played with a lot of energy," Moulson said. "They really play a smart game and try to smother you in their own end and not give you much inside."

The Sabres had a goal disallowed following a video review seven minutes in.

Kinkaid stopped Rasmus Ristolainen's shot from the right circle but gave up a rebound into the slot. Replays showed that Johan Larsson clearly directed the puck into the net with his right skate.

"You don't want to start off the period down early, but I saw that kicking motion," Kinkaid said. "I had confidence it wasn't going to be allowed."

NOTES: The Sabres recalled C Mikhail Grigorenko from AHL Rochester, and demoted forward Tim Schaller and defenseman Chad Ruhwedel. ... Henrique extended his points streak to four games, in which he has two goals and three assists. ... The Devils won their first game at Buffalo since a 4-1 victory on Feb. 14, 2012, to snap an 0-1-3 skid.

## **Sabres-Predators preview**

By Kevin Chroust

Associated Press

March 21, 2015

The Nashville Predators are taking responsibility for their home losing streak, but a look at their opponents reveals there hasn't been a bad one in the bunch.

They won't be able to say that after Saturday night, when they'll try to end their five-game slide at Bridgestone Arena against the NHL-worst Buffalo Sabres.

Nashville's struggles include a 2-8-1 overall record and a 0-4-1 span at home after Tuesday's 3-2 overtime loss to Minnesota. The Predators (43-21-8) dropped just seven points at home in their first 30 games with a 26-3-1 record accounting for the best mark in hockey while never losing consecutive contests.

"It's frustrating," coach Peter Laviolette said. "It's frustrating for everybody. At the end of the night, you've got to win games. We had an opportunity to win the last two games and we didn't get it done. There are things that we can do better."

While they've allowed 3.00 goals per game over the past 11 - up from 2.26 in their first 61 - their 1.73-goal average in that span is down from 2.95 and likely the greater concern.

Nashville's power play over a 4-9-2 span dating to Feb. 19 is 4 for 46 (8.7 percent) and better than only the New York Rangers.

Individually, Roman Josi scored both goals against the Wild and has three in his last two contests, but things fall off from there. Team points leader Filip Forsberg (55) has been limited to three assists in 11 games, Mike Ribeiro (54) has been shut out in five, and Mike Fisher has been blanked in six.

James Neal, tied for the team lead with 22 goals, has scored once in his last 11 games and has missed the last three as well as Friday's practice with an upper-body injury. Colin Wilson, who has one goal in 13 games, suffered a lower-body injury Thursday in practice and was out Friday, leading Nashville to recall 21-year-old Viktor Arvidsson for his NHL debut.

There's still no panic despite having fallen two points back of Central Division-leading St. Louis, while Chicago is lurking just two back. The Blues have a game in hand and the Blackhawks have two.

"I think we're good," forward Viktor Stalberg told the team's official website. "We're in a spot where we're still chasing the top seed both in the conference and the league, and with 10 games to go, we're in a situation where we have a chance to do that."

Even if the offense doesn't come around against the Sabres, it's difficult to envision the Predators giving up much.

Pekka Rinne has just a 2.72 goals-against average over a 3-8-2 span after posting a 1.94 through a 34-7-2 start, but he's 1-1-0 with a 0.50 mark against the Sabres.

He didn't play in a 2-1 shootout win in Buffalo on Feb. 22, which was Nashville's third straight in the series with an 11-3 scoring edge. Shea Weber, who has two points in his last 15 games, has three goals and an assist during the Preds' series winning streak.

The Sabres (20-44-7) have the fewest away points in hockey (19), and a 3-1 home loss to New Jersey on Friday establishes their scoring average over a 1-6-2 span at 1.56 goals per game.

"I don't think we played with a lot of energy," said Matt Moulson, who scored but is without a goal in six career games against Nashville.

The Sabres' scoring leaves Anders Lindback with about no hope of a win when allowing at least three goals. He's 0-9-2 when doing so this season and 0-3-2 since joining the Sabres.

In his last four games, he's 1-2-1 despite posting a 1.93 GAA.

## **Rinne makes 24 saves in Predators' 3-0 win over Sabres**

By Jeff Diamond

Associated Press

March 22, 2015

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Pekka Rinne faced only a few tests from the Buffalo Sabres, and handled every one perfectly.

Rinne made 24 saves to lead the Nashville Predators to a 3-0 win over the Buffalo Sabres on Saturday night.

"I thought that we played really well," Rinne said. "We defended really well the whole 60 minutes. At the end they had a few chances, but other than that, I thought we did a really good job."

Taylor Beck, Craig Smith, and Mike Fisher scored for Nashville, which snapped a two-game losing streak. Rinne earned his third shutout of the season and 36th of his NHL career.

Matt Hackett made 40 saves for Buffalo, which has lost nine of 10.

Beck gave the Predators a 1-0 lead at 14:52 of the second period.

Buffalo's Johan Larsson was whistled for a holding-the-stick penalty in the offensive zone. Matt Cullen won the ensuing faceoff back to Shea Weber at the right point, and he fired a slap shot. Beck skated through the slot and tipped the puck past Hackett for his second goal in three games.

"Webs got a good shot off, and I got a tip on it," Beck said. "Whenever you can start with it off the faceoff, it's absolutely huge. It's hard enough to break in in this league, so when you can start with it and get a shot right off the bat, it's huge."

Hackett had been stellar to that point, turning aside the first 26 shots he faced.

"I thought he was good. He gave us a chance," Buffalo coach Ted Nolan said. "It wasn't an easy game to play. They have some good shooters on the other team, so I thought he played really well."

In their previous two games, Nashville held third-period leads that slipped away. On Saturday, they added two goals in the final period to seal the victory.

Smith made it 2-0 at 5:49 of the third.

Ryan Ellis drove down the right side and fired a slap shot from the top of the circle. Hackett made the stop, but the rebound came into the slot, where Smith scored his 23rd goal.

Ellis had a pair of assists.

"It was nice to see the change in the third period," Nashville coach Peter Laviolette said. "We were able to capitalize on a couple of the goals. That's something we haven't been able to do the last two games.

"It was nice to be able to get the second one and then the third one."

Rinne's best save came with 8:03 remaining when he denied Jerry D'Amigo on a breakaway.

D'Amigo missed the entire second period after taking a high stick from Smith to the face that drew blood late in the first. Smith was given a 4-minute penalty.

D'Amigo returned to the game in the third, wearing a full cage.

Rinne also denied Tyler Ennis on a late breakaway, and Cody Hodgson on a wrist shot from the left side.

"Rinne made some big saves," Ennis said. "I thought in the third period, we had probably five really good chances to score and couldn't put one by him. He played well."

Fisher scored at 15:01 of the third with a wrist shot from the high slot.

NOTES: Nashville C Paul Gaustad, formerly of the Sabres, won all 13 faceoffs he took. ... Cullen has four assists in his last four games. ... Nashville LW Viktor Arvidsson made his NHL debut. ... Buffalo is 1-9-1 against the Central Division. ... The Sabres have lost four consecutive games against Nashville. ... Buffalo is 4-12-1 in the second of back-to-back games.

## **Sabres-Stars preview**

Associated Press

March 22, 2015

The Dallas Stars are playing well, though they know they face an uphill battle to reach the playoffs.

There's little doubt they regret losing earlier this season to the league-worst Buffalo Sabres.

The Stars can avenge that loss Monday night at home, where coach Lindy Ruff seeks to improve to 3-1-0 against his former club.

Dallas (34-28-10) moved to 5-1-0 in its last six with Saturday's 4-0 home win over Chicago. Kari Lehtonen stopped 33 shots, including a penalty shot, for his fifth shutout.

The Stars are eight points behind Winnipeg for the Western Conference's final wild-card spot. Those teams have 10 games left, and Dallas is also behind three other clubs.

"We put ourselves in a tough spot," Ruff said. "That chase is hard, it's going to be agonizing is what it's gonna be but we just gotta keep taking care of our own end. We can't do anything about Winnipeg winning. Our responsibility is to take it a day at a time and keep winning games."

Ruff spent 15 seasons coaching Buffalo (20-45-7) before taking over in Dallas before last season. The Stars swept both 2013-14 matchups, then fell 3-2 on the road Feb. 7, a contest Dallas' Tyler Seguin called "an embarrassing one to lose."

Zemgus Girgensons had a goal and an assist in that matchup, the Sabres' lone victory in 11 games against Central Division opponents.

The Stars are the NHL's second-highest scoring team with 3.07 goals per game while the Sabres are last at 1.76.

Both teams have struggled defensively, with Buffalo yielding 3.28 goals per game for the second-worst mark and Dallas 3.15 for fifth worst.

The Stars have been much better over this six-game stretch, allowing 10 goals with only two opponents registering more than 30 shots.

"There's been some real good support by our forwards coming back, which has really helped the defending part and keeping the goals against down," Ruff said.

Buffalo goaltenders face a league-high 35.5 shots per game and have seen 38.5 since the All-Star break. Winless Matt Hackett made 40 saves in Saturday's 3-0 loss at Nashville.

Anders Lindback could play his first game in Dallas since the Stars dealt him to Buffalo for Jhonas Enroth in a swap of goalies Feb. 11. Lindback is 1-4-2 with a 2.49 goals-against average in eight appearances with the Sabres.

Rebuilding Buffalo continues to count on the development of young players. Mikhail Grigorenko has earned praise from Nolan for playing well in two games since being recalled from the minors Friday.

"He does have those skills that got him to be a No. 1 pick (in 2012)," coach Ted Nolan said. "Now he's got to learn to play like that all the time."

Center Tyler Ennis has five points in the last three meetings with the Stars.

Two key Sabres personnel absences figure to make this rematch easier for Dallas. Buffalo will be without Girgensons, who has been out since Feb. 24 with a right leg injury. Chris Stewart assisted on all three Sabres goals in the first meeting, but has since been dealt to Minnesota.

## **Sabres' home loss to Devils is a crowd-pleaser**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 20, 2015

There's been a respectful silence by draft-hopeful Sabres fans on game nights this season. Though many talk about wanting Buffalo to lose during outside conversations, they haven't voiced their opinion inside First Niagara Center.

That changed Friday night. It's crazy to think how the Sabres' next home game might go.

Tank Nation walked into the arena aware that a Buffalo victory would pull the home team within one point of 29th-place Arizona. Since only No. 30 gets a guaranteed shot at prospects Connor McDavid or Jack Eichel, many fans loudly rooted for the New Jersey Devils.

The visitors repaid the support, earning a 3-1 victory to keep Buffalo three points behind the Coyotes with 11 games to go. The Sabres play in Nashville on Saturday night, while Arizona hosts Pittsburgh.

After visiting Dallas on Monday, the Sabres return home to face Arizona on Thursday. Based on Friday's goings-ons, the Coyotes might have home-ice advantage.

While there were certainly pockets of red-clad Devils fans in the generously announced sellout of 19,070, there weren't enough to reach the decibel levels that came after New Jersey's goals. There certainly weren't enough to generate the amount of applause after a Buffalo goal was waved off by video review during the first period.

The dynamic at the Sabres' six remaining home games should be interesting with the race for last coming down to the wire.

"It can be frustrating when you look at the standings," Sabres right wing Tyler Ennis said, "so you try not to look at it."

The Sabres' Johan Larsson provided the NHL with definitive video of a "distinct kicking motion" during one of the few highlights. He lit the scoring lamp during a rush by Buffalo by booting the puck in the net. Officials went to the video review and quickly overturned the call.

A cheer went up from the crowd.

"Probably the turning point was when Larsson's goal was disallowed," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "You get a lead on New Jersey, it's a different game. But when you try to go from behind on them, they clog up the middle and it gets to be a pretty boring game."

Devils forward Steve Bernier, who had one of the most memorable debuts in Buffalo history with a two-goal, three-point outing in 2008, did in his old team with a two-goal second period. The outburst gave him 100 career goals in his 598th game.

Although Buffalo gave up just 53 shot attempts compared with the 95 they allowed Tuesday against Boston, the results were worse. Anders Lindback made 24 saves in his eighth straight appearance and is expected to give way to Matt Hackett on Saturday.

"Obviously, if you look at the shots, it's not as many, but I think the quality of chances we gave up were more than we've given up in the recent games," defenseman Tyson Strachan said. "Lindy's played great for us, but we can't keep giving up two-on-ones and breakaways and expect to get out of games with wins."

Jordin Tootoo made it 3-0 with 11:46 to go before Buffalo finally ended New Jersey's bid for a second straight shutout. Matt Moulson cleaned up an Ennis slap shot with 8:19 to play, giving Buffalo a power-play goal for the third consecutive outing.

The Sabres made a surprise roster move a few hours before puck drop, summoning Mikhail Grigorenko from Rochester for the sixth time this season. To make room, Buffalo sent Tim Schaller back to the Amerks.

Schaller, who'd been centering the third and fourth lines, had one goal and one assist in 13 games. Grigorenko slid into Schaller's spot between left wing Nicolas Deslauriers and right wing Cody Hodgson.

For the second straight game, it didn't go well for Grigorenko. Nolan lambasted the center's effort after a one-shot, minus-1 night March 6 in Ottawa. Grigorenko played a team-low 8:06 against the Devils, was on the ice for two goals against and didn't record a shot.

"Right now guys are vying for jobs and seeing how they respond," Nolan said. "He's just got to be better."

## **Sabres notebook: Nashville, Dallas need to keep winning**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 20, 2015

There's a tendency for teams to take the Sabres lightly. Buffalo's next two opponents don't have that luxury.

Following Friday's 3-1 loss to over New Jersey, the Sabres boarded their charter for a two-game road trip. They visit Nashville on Saturday and play against Lindy Ruff and the Dallas Stars on Monday. The games have playoff implications for Buffalo's opponents.

Nashville is desperate for a victory after falling out of first place in the Western Conference's Central Division. The Predators are just 2-8-1 in their last 11 games and trail St. Louis by two points.

"It's frustrating because nobody wants to lose games," coach Peter Laviolette told reporters in Nashville. "You do a lot of things right and there's things that you can do better, or you're not getting the results that you want. It can be frustrating, but our group's got a lot of confidence in the fact that we've won a lot of games this year.

"We got back to work on some things, and I think that'll help with the confidence as well."

The Predators' scoring has dried up with 14 goals in the last nine games. Forwards Colin Wilson (20 goals, 20 assists) and James Neal (22 goals) missed practice Friday with injuries. To fill the hole, the Preds called up rookie Viktor Arvidsson from the minors, where he led Milwaukee with 20 goals and 51 points in 63 games.

"We're still getting chances, but the games seem to be getting a little bit tighter," Laviolette said in Nashville. "There's been games where we've had lots of attempts and just haven't gotten the results."

Dallas, meanwhile, is winning but can't climb the standings. The 12th-place Stars are on a 6-2 run but have gained just one point on a wild-card spot. Dallas is eight points out of a playoff position.

The Stars, coming off a 2-1 victory over Pittsburgh, host Chicago on Saturday.

"We can only control what we do," Ruff said on Stars.com. "My frustration is some of those earlier home games that we didn't win. The frustration in not putting the puck in the back of the net against Winnipeg in a game when we totally dominated. We've made other goalies the stars of the night. Those are my frustrations.

"You control what you are able to control. The rest you've got to sit around and hope for."

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There haven't been many opportunities for Sabres players to earn praise, but coach Ted Nolan found time for two Friday.

"Somebody asked me who's the most consistent player on this team and who's the most valuable player on the team this year," Nolan said in First Niagara Center. "Tyler Ennis, by far. His vision, his dynamic, his intuition with the puck, he darts in and out, he's competitive.

"Scoring 18 goals now without – no knock against the centermen he had – but you give him a legitimate, experienced center iceman to feed him some pucks, the sky is the limit for this kid. You look at 18, you could look at 38, 40."

Nolan also had been impressed by defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, who entered the meeting with the Devils on a two-game point streak while averaging 28:17 of ice time during the contests.

"For every time he took a step back, he took two steps forward," Nolan said. "This is another situation where he's playing OK, then all of a sudden the last couple he's been lifting his game up even to a better level.

"His vision is certainly up there with the elite guys in this league. Once maturity catches up, he should be a dandy."

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Sabres defenseman Mike Weber played his 300th NHL game. Fellow blue-liner Andrej Meszaros returned after missing two games with an upper-body injury, forcing the Sabres to send Chad Ruhwedel back to Rochester. The defenseman was up on an emergency recall with Meszaros and Zach Bogosian sidelined. Bogosian missed his fourth straight game with a lower-body ailment.

## **Hackett shows his stuff in defeat**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

March 22, 2015

NASHVILLE – Maybe Arturs Irbe is some sort of Latvian sorcerer.

It almost makes no difference who is in the crease for the Buffalo Sabres because the team's goaltending coach has every guy who takes over in the blue paint standing on his head.

From the departed Jhonas Enroth and Michal Neuvirth. To Anders Lindback, the guy every tanking Sabres fan wanted to see play who suddenly became the guy who absolutely had to grab some bench.

And now comes Matt Hackett.

Hackett didn't get a win Saturday night as the Sabres dropped a 3-0 decision to the Nashville Predators in Bridgestone Arena. But the 25-year-old was terrific on a night when the overmatched Sabres didn't have much jump while playing the second half of a back-to-back set.

Hackett stopped the first 25 shots he faced, until Taylor Beck deflected home a Shea Weber drive to open the scoring on a power play at 14:52 of the second period. He finished with a career-high 40 saves in what probably ranks as the signature performance of his NHL career.

It certainly was far and away the best of his three NHL games this year, and thus his best since the catastrophic knee injury he suffered last April in Boston that put his career in doubt.

"I thought he was good. He gave us a chance," said Sabres coach Ted Nolan. "For a kid who sat on the bench the last couple of weeks patiently waiting, we had a chance to work with him the last couple days and get him prepped to play this game. It wasn't an easy game to play. They've got some good shooters on the other team and I thought he played real well."

Hackett had a 5.22 goals-against average and .867 save percentage in his first two starts for the Sabres this season, getting pulled in his second one March 7 in Washington. He got pulled here last year too, giving up four goals on 15 shots in a 6-1 Buffalo loss. This was clearly a much better look.

Hackett was unavailable to comment afterward, as he was in a long session in the trainers' room. There appeared to be no injury issue. The poor guy simply had to be exhausted.

Hackett was at the top of his crease, and thus at the top of his game. He had to be.

This was a standard-issue Sabres affair, with Buffalo outshot badly (43-24) and getting destroyed in possession. The Predators had 76 shot attempts in the game and the Sabres had just 43. Many of them were borne from a decisive 37-22 advantage in faceoff victories – which included a perfect 13-0 mark from former Sabre Paul Gaustad.

Pekka Rinne made 24 saves for Nashville, including several spectacular ones in the third period, to post his 38th win of the season. It was the 12th time Buffalo has been blanked this season, extending the franchise record.

"We had some chances there to get back into it," said Tyler Ennis. "Their goalie was good, made some big stops."

Hackett made plenty too, keeping the Sabres afloat when they were outshot, 17-6, in the first period. He never lost his edge.

Nashville's first goal came after Buffalo center Johan Larsson was nailed for holding the stick in the offensive zone at 14:48 of the second period.

The Nashville power play – in a 4-for-46 slump the last 15 games – paid immediate dividends as it took just four seconds for the scoreless tie to be broken. Mike Fisher won a faceoff from Brian Gionta and the puck was shipped to Weber at the left point by Matt Cullen. Weber's shot was neatly deflected home by Beck, slicing through the slot from right to left.

The Preds made it 2-0 on Craig Smith's goal at 5:49 of the third, a rebound of a Ryan Ellis slapper on a three-on-one break. The play started when Nikita Zadorov broke his stick in the Preds' zone and then foolishly headed to the Buffalo bench, rather than at least try to keep his 6-foot-5 frame in the play.

"He's got to mature," Nolan said matter-of-factly. "I don't know how many times you have to be told to put your stick on the ice, how many times you have to stop, how many times to finish a hit and play with some energy. You keep doing it over and over again and maybe one day you'll learn."

Rinne preserved his shutout with 11 saves in the third period. After the second Nashville goal, the Sabres buzzed the net some more. Mikhail Grigorenko and Andrej Meszaros both hit posts. Rinne stopped Jerry D'Amigo on a breakaway and made a miraculous backhand save on Ennis.

Shortly after that stop, Fisher made it 3-0 at 15:01 with a quick snapshot from the slot.

"They're not one of the top teams by accident," Nolan said. "And their goaltender is one of the world-class goaltenders also. If it wasn't for him, it could have been a little bit different."

## **Lindback's success no shock to Rinne**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

March 22, 2015

NASHVILLE – Fans in Buffalo and certainly many people around the hockey world have been stunned by the sudden emergence of Anders Lindback as the Sabres' top goaltender this month.

One of the game's best goalies, however, isn't shocked at all.

Nashville Predators standout Pekka Rinne worked with Lindback on a daily basis for two years and told The News Saturday he's not surprised his former backup has blossomed, once given a chance for a regular role.

"I'm happy for him. He's a really good guy and a great friend. I believed he can be a great goalie in this league," Rinne said prior to the Predators' game against the Buffalo Sabres in Bridgestone Arena. "It's great he's finally had a chance to play."

Rinne did not, however, get the chance to start against his former teammate in the game, which did not conclude in time for this edition. The Sabres went with Matt Hackett in goal, snapping Lindback's run of five straight starts.

Lindback played 38 games for the Predators over the 2010-11 and 2011-12 seasons and his numbers were certainly decent. He was 11-5-2, 2.60 and .915 in '10-11, and was 5-8-0, 2.42, .912 in '11-12 before moving on to Tampa Bay.

"Everybody needs that opportunity," Rinne said. "Goalie is such a fragile position. You get a chance, and if everything doesn't go smooth, it becomes somebody else's turn. That's the way it goes. Sometimes you need more time or you need different opportunities. For his sake, I hope he keeps that position and keeps playing well."

Rinne said he was particularly impressed with Lindback's 44-save performance in Tuesday's shootout win in Boston.

"The Boston game was unbelievable. He was so confident," Rinne said. "It's really nice that he is able to showcase himself and people can see how good he can be and how good of a goalie he is."

Rinne said he was particularly impressed with how Lindback took over for him early in '10-11 when he was out with a knee injury.

"It's the way he works. It always begins with the work ethic and the way you practice," Rinne said. "You can look at 4-5 games and it won't tell too much. It's your character, your day-in, day-out work and how you prepare. In that sense, I've always felt Lindy is a true professional that works hard. That's how it starts and that's how you keep it going."

The 6-foot-5 Rinne and the 6-foot-6 Lindback were similar in style and stature, and Lindback told Buffalo reporters this week he continues to hear encouragement from Rinne as his role with the Sabres grows.

"Each goalie has his own challenges, whether you're a big guy or a smaller guy or an average size guy," Rinne said. "There's always adjustments and things you have to adapt to. Shorter guys need to read shots better and work hard not to give up room. Bigger guys have to make sure there's no holes and you stay fast on your skates and have quick feet. Lindy is really looking great. I'm happy for him."

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Penn State forward Casey Bailey, who had reportedly been in some negotiations with the Sabres, signed a two-year free agent contract with the Toronto Maple Leafs on Saturday and is expected to immediately join the Leafs' NHL roster. The Leafs will be in Buffalo to meet the Sabres on April 1.

The 6-foot-3, 195-pound Bailey, who is from Anchorage, Alaska, had 22 goals and 18 assists in 37 games for Penn State and had several teams interested in his services as a college free agent. The Sabres were presumed to be a prime contender because of the Penn State connections of owner Terry Pegula, whose name is on the Nittany Lions' home arena.

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The Sabres moved Jerry D'Amigo to the No. 3 line with Mikhail Grigorenko and Cody Hodgson and shifted Nicolas Deslauriers to the fourth line with Matt Ellis and Zac Dalpe. D'Amigo left late in the first period after taking a high stick to the side of the face from Nashville's Craig Smith, which resulted in a double minor. ... Zach Bogosian sat out his fifth straight game with a lower body injury. ... Friday's loss to New Jersey marked just the sixth time in 71 games this season the Sabres outshot their opponent. The count was 29-27. ... Predators fan Tim Kopra, who flew on the Space Shuttle Discovery and International Space Station, presented Rinne with the No. 35 jersey he took into space on multiple missions during a pregame ceremony.

## **Inside the NHL: Will Sabres-Coyotes clashes portend future?**

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 22, 2015

Hype and hyperbole are as commonplace as pucks, helmets and balls in the sporting world. Our sports department has long joked about using "Big game today" as a daily headline.

There are times when the excitement and anticipation are merited. The Sabres have reached that time.

It's not an overstatement to say the next eight days can alter the future of the franchise. Two upcoming games might have as much impact as drafting Gilbert Perreault, trading for Dominik Hasek and letting Chris Drury and Daniel Briere walk away.

Yes, the games against Arizona on Thursday and March 30 are that big.

As hockey fans know, only 30th place is guaranteed to draft Connor McDavid or Jack Eichel. The Coyotes, in 29th, were three points ahead of the Sabres heading into Saturday's schedule.

If Arizona wins both meetings between the teams, the "race" for last is all but over; the Sabres would likely have too much ground to make up with only six games left. If the teams split, the final two weeks of the season will feature nail-biting moments. If the Sabres win both, they'll likely have to rely on the lottery. The Coyotes' remaining schedule is more difficult.

Some say it doesn't matter, that Buffalo would still get a good player with the third pick. It's true. An analysis of 20 drafts we did a couple of years ago showed that the top-five draftees turn out to be impact players.

But finishing last and drafting in the top two will improve Buffalo's chances for a championship and help in the Sabres Store, on television and at the bottom line. Here's how:

- Stanley Cup dreams – History shows the Sabres have a 67 percent chance of reaching the finals and a 50 percent chance of winning a Cup if they draft second. If they draft third, the likelihood of a finals appearance drops to 25 percent.

Since 1979, when the NHL expanded to 21 teams, nine non-expansion organizations have drafted in the top two in consecutive years, which is what the Sabres are hoping to do. Three of the clubs – Tampa Bay (2008-09), Edmonton (2010 to 2012) and Florida (2013-14) - did it too recently to be included in our study.

The remaining six are Winnipeg (1980-81), Minnesota ('82-83), Pittsburgh ('84-85), Quebec ('89 to '91), San Jose ('96-97) and Pittsburgh ('03 to '06). Of the six, four reached the Stanley Cup finals within eight years (Minnesota, Quebec/Colorado and both Pittsburgh clubs). Three won the Cup, with the North Stars losing to the Penguins in 1991. The winners combined for five championships.

Those are impressive results.

(Quick aside to a commonly heard argument/taunt that the Penguins have won only once in the Sidney Crosby, Evgeni Malkin era: So what? There's an entire cottage industry of "One before I die" memorabilia in Buffalo. For a sports town that has never won anything, one means everything.)

Meanwhile, four teams have drafted second and third in consecutive years since 1979. Only New Jersey (1984 to '87) reached the finals within eight years, winning a Cup in 1995. The New York Islanders '95-96), San Jose ('96 to 98) and Florida (2002-03) failed to reach the finals.

- Money, money, money – McDavid and Eichel are already household names. Getting one of them would give the Sabres a marketing rock star for the first time since the jerseys of Drury, Briere and Ryan Miller were flying off shelves in 2006.

Every day was like Christmastime in the Sabres Store during that era. Lines of people spent up to \$100,000 on game days and \$40,000 on off days. While McDavid might not bring that in on his own, he'd instantly become the face of the franchise. Kids would relate to him like they do to Patrick Kane and Crosby, and the merchandise would be hot.

The Sabres keep all revenue from merchandise sold inside the arena, while products sold at NHL.com get split equally between the league's 30 teams. Having McDavid or Eichel in the building would add cash to the Pegulas' pockets.

Money would head the Sabres' way from many directions with a potential superstar in town. Television ratings would go up, allowing the team to charge more for ads. While the Sabres have 16,000 season-ticket holders, they've sold out just 15 of their 36 home games. The rookie would sell more seats.

Buffalo, which already has a fan base that spreads from coast-to-coast, would get new backers thanks to an increase in exposure. The Sabres already have double-digit appearances on national TV. They'd be the "Game of the Week" regularly with Eichel or McDavid.

Taking all that into consideration, even "big game today" headlines won't do justice to the Sabres and Coyotes meetings. The games should be colossal.

### **McIntyre tabbed for worlds**

The officiating career of Amherst's Fraser McIntyre continues its upswing.

The International Ice Hockey Federation has announced that McIntyre will be one of three American officials to work this year's world championship in the Czech Republic. He will serve as a linesman after handling the role at the 2013 under-18 world championships and the 2014 world junior championship.

The 31-year-old graduate of Williamsville South has worked in the American Hockey League and NCAA this season.

### **On the fly**

- Ryan Miller and his wife, Noreen DeWulf, welcomed son Bodhi Ryan Miller on Friday.
- Detroit and Tampa Bay are on pace to meet in the first round of the playoffs. The Lightning have won seven of the eight meetings between the teams during the last two seasons.
- Ottawa fans are tossing burgers onto the ice after wins by goaltender Andrew "The Hamburglar" Hammond. Senators rookie Curtis Lazar picked one up and ate it. "That burger really could have used some ketchup!" Lazar wrote on Twitter. "Cmon people!"

## **A glimmer of Sabres' Grigorenko not enough**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

March 22, 2015

DALLAS – When it comes to Mikhail Grigorenko, the Buffalo Sabres are looking for any small glimmer of hope. Numbers aren't there, so the 20-year-old is better judged by how much offense he's creating.

Mostly a bust in his multiple trips to the NHL this season, Grigorenko got his feet moving and made things happen during the third period of Saturday's 3-0 loss in Nashville. Now the trick for him, something he's rarely mastered in the NHL, is to do that in consecutive games. He'll get that chance when the Sabres meet the Dallas Stars on Monday night in American Airlines Center. The team took Sunday off.

The numbers are the numbers for Grigorenko and they're ugly. He's played 15 NHL games this year with just one goal and one assist. He's played 58 games in Buffalo over the last three seasons with just four goals and six assists.

Grigorenko had some success Saturday centering Jerry D'Amigo and Cody Hodgson. He fed Hodgson for a good scoring chance in the second period and made a neat feed to D'Amigo for a third-period breakthrough. Late in the game, Grigorenko himself neatly snapped Pekka Rinne's shutout with a quick snap shot that beat the Nashville goalie but rifled off the goalpost.

"We had chances. Unfortunately we couldn't score but overall it was a good game for our line," Grigorenko said after the game. "I beat him on the shot and I'm frustrated but at the same time I'm happy I had some chances. The first period wasn't really good but I kept working and skating and the chances started coming to me."

For the most part, Sabres coach Ted Nolan clearly seems unimpressed with Grigorenko. The Sabres coach played Grigorenko for just 8:09 of Friday's loss to New Jersey, when the center was minus-2. Grigorenko got up to 12:47 in Nashville and the line didn't give up a goal.

Nolan said he was happy to see Grigorenko creating some offense in the third period, but remained stingy with any praise for the 20-year-old.

Said Nolan: "He does have those skills that got him to be a No. 1 pick. He's got to learn to play like that all the time."

Prior to the game, Nolan said he's hoping to see the kind of breakthrough from Grigorenko that Johan Larsson has had this month.

"No question that's what he has to do in order to play in this league," Nolan said. "You don't get too many opportunities. They come and go and slip away before you know it. He's a young guy still learning his trade. The one thing he can improve on his intensity and urgency."

"... We're going to be hard on him but also understanding with him. We have to try to find the button to compete with him at a certain level. Larsson, his first couple times with us were just OK. Now he's competing much better. Maybe the same thing will hold true with Grigorenko."

Grigorenko said he's noticed a difference in Larsson's play at the NHL level this month as well.

"I really noticed he was working hard even when he wasn't scoring," Grigorenko said. "He plays the same way and with the confidence. I'm really happy to see him succeed and I'm looking to do the same thing."

Nolan criticized Grigorenko after Friday's game and Grigorenko had a pedestrian first period again Saturday.

"Sometimes offense and the puck is just not there," Grigorenko said. "The first period was a lot of 'D' zone and playing without the puck. I was focused on skating and doing the right things without the puck. Finally we were able to get the puck and do some things."

The game seemed to turn for Grigorenko when he won a possession battle in the second period along the boards and fed Hodgson for a good chance.

"That was the moment everything started going," he said. "That was the first time in the game I was able to get the puck and work with it a little bit."

Nolan demands grit from all his forwards but knows it's a very delicate balance with a skill player like Grigorenko.

"When you try to ask players to be a bit gritty, they think they have to go out and bang people," Nolan said. "That's not his game. His game is being strong on the puck, driving to the net, jumping in holes and creating some offense."

In theory, it would make sense to give Grigorenko the final 10 games of the season to see what, if anything, he can produce. He's no longer on emergency recall so it seems like it's a good bet that will happen for the pending restricted free agent.

"Obviously I'd like to stay here for the rest of the year -- and the rest of my life," he said. "It's a good chance for me. Playing in the NHL is where I want to be. I want to play here as long as I can. Hopefully I'll give the team good games."

...

The Sabres lost out on a key college free agent Saturday night when Penn State forward Casey Bailey signed a two-year contract with the Toronto Maple Leafs. Bailey's father confirmed to the Penn State student newspaper that there were lengthy negotiations with the Sabres, but that the Leafs offered an immediate NHL job.

Glen Bailey said Sabres General Manager Tim Murray did not want his son playing in the NHL this season, thus saving the Sabres from burning a year off Bailey's entry-level contract.

## **The McEichel Derby: It may be a two-team race as Oilers pull out OT win over Flyers while Sabres, Coyotes lose again**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

March 22, 2015

NASHVILLE -- It was a late night in the race for the bottom of the NHL's standings as the Sabres joined the Arizona Coyotes and Edmonton Oilers in escaping the Eastern Time Zone.

The biggest takeaway from Saturday: With 10 games left for the three contenders, this looks like a two-team "race" (yes, the quotes are intentional) between Darcy Regier's old team and the former Sabres GM's new team.

The Edmonton Oilers rallied from a 3-1 deficit and pulled out a 5-4 overtime win over Philadelphia in Saturday's final game, pushing six points ahead of the last-place Sabres. Buffalo and Arizona, meanwhile, both lost in regulation as they careen toward Thursday's bizarre showdown in First Niagara Center.

[In today's Inside the NHL column, John Vogl writes](#) that the upcoming pair of games against the Coyotes "might have as much impact as drafting Gilbert Perreault, trading for Dominik Hasek and letting Chris Drury and Daniel Briere walk away."

On the ice Saturday night:

---[The Sabres suffered a 3-0 loss in Nashville](#) despite a career-best 40 saves from Matt Hackett, who was terrific in goal. Next up is Monday's game against the Flying Lindy Ruffs in Dallas, who handed Chicago a 4-0 blanking on Saturday night. Does Ted Nolan go back with Hackett or put Anders Lindback on the ice against the team he started the season with?

Speaking of Lindback, his NHL career started as Pekka Rinne's backup in Nashville and [the Predators star told me Saturday he's not surprised by what his old teammate is doing](#).

The Sabres are 1-6-2 in their last nine games and will be off today in Dallas before meeting the Stars Monday night.

---Edmonton got Taylor Hall back, used some loose goaltending from Philadelphia's Ray Emery [and got the game-winner from Ryan Nugent-Hopkins](#) to beat the Flyers. Hall assisted.

---The Coyotes got a short-handed goal just 94 seconds into the game thanks to a Sidney Crosby giveaway and never scored again [in a 3-1 loss to Pittsburgh](#). The Coyotes have lost five straight games in regulation, are 0-6-1 in their last seven -- and are a ghastly 1-16-1 since Feb. 9. Tank City, folks.

---It was a huge night on the ice for Jack Eichel as well, as Boston University completed its transformation from a 10-21 team to the champions of Hockey East for the first time since 2009 [by beating Mass-Lowell, 5-3, in the championship game](#) at TD Garden. Eichel had two goals and an assist in the win and was named tournament MVP after collecting 11 points in the four games. His 66 points for the season now rank as the most by any NCAA freshman since Paul Kariya piled up 100 for Maine in the 1992-93 season.

[Wrote Boston Herald columnist Steve Buckley](#) in quoting BU coach David Quinn: "He's the Secretariat of hockey players."

Check out this #sickmitts goal Eichel scored last night in the first period:

### **The Standings**

|          | GP | W  | L  | OT | Pts |
|----------|----|----|----|----|-----|
| Buffalo  | 72 | 20 | 45 | 7  | 47  |
| Arizona  | 72 | 21 | 43 | 8  | 50  |
| Edmonton | 72 | 20 | 39 | 13 | 53  |

### Remaining Schedules

**Buffalo (10):** March 23 at Dallas, 26 vs. Arizona, 28 at Colorado, 30 at Arizona. April 1 vs. Toronto, 3 vs. Chicago, 4 at New York Islanders, 6 vs. Carolina, 10 at Columbus, 11 vs. Pittsburgh.

**Arizona (10):** March 22 vs. Vancouver, 24 at Detroit, 26 at Buffalo, 28 at Pittsburgh, 30 vs. Buffalo. April 3 at San Jose, 4 vs. San Jose, 7 at Calgary, 9 at Vancouver, 11 vs. Anaheim.

**Edmonton (10):** March 23 vs. Winnipeg, 25 vs. Colorado, 27 vs. Dallas, 30 at Colorado. April 1 at Anaheim, 2 at Los Angeles, 4 vs. Calgary, 7 vs. Los Angeles, 9 vs. San Jose, 11 at Vancouver.

### Lottery Odds

The team finishing last overall has a 20% chance of receiving the No. 1 overall pick but will draft no worse than second. The team finishing next-to-last overall has a 13.5% chance of drafting first. The odds of drafting first continue to diminish moving upward in the standings as such: 11.5%, 9.5%, 8.5%, 7.5%, 6.5%, 6%, 5%, 3.5%, 3%, 2.5%, 2%, 1%.

### The Players

#### *Connor McDavid, Erie Otters*

| Gms | G  | A  | Pts | +/- | Next Up             |
|-----|----|----|-----|-----|---------------------|
| 47  | 44 | 76 | 120 | +60 | March 22 at Niagara |

#### *Jack Eichel, Boston University*

| Gms | G  | A  | Pts | +/-  | Next Up              |
|-----|----|----|-----|------|----------------------|
| 36  | 24 | 42 | 66  | + 46 | NCAA Tournament, TBA |

## **USA Hockey tourney coming to Amherst Northtown Center**

**By James Fink**

**Buffalo Business First**

**March 20, 2015**

Some of the country's top teen-aged players will be coming to town next week as part of a large-scale USA Hockey tournament.

USA Hockey Tier I National Championships will be held from March 26 to 30 at the Northtown Center at Amherst, bringing with it the top U14, U16 and U18 teams. A total of 48 teams will be in the tournament includes ones from Amherst and the Buffalo Jr. Sabres organization.

Visit Buffalo Niagara, which is presenting the tournament along with Amherst Youth Hockey, the Buffalo Sabres and Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission, said more than 3,500 hotel room nights have been booked across the region because of the tournament. The anticipated economic impact of the event will exceed \$2.5 million.

Combined with a pair of New York state hockey championships held earlier this month, also at the Northtown Center, the economic impact from the three events will top \$4.5 million, according to Visit Buffalo Niagara statistics.

"Teams come in early and stay late," said Robert Schell, Amherst Youth Hockey tournament chair. "It has a huge economic impact."

The tournament marks the ninth time since 2003 that the Northtown Center has hosted a major USA Hockey youth tournament.

"It feels like a second home," said Dave Fischer, USA Hockey spokesman.

As part of the tournament, several trophies on loan from the Hockey Hall of Fame will be on display in the Northtown Center's lobby.

## **Bernier scores twice to help Devils top Sabres**

By Joe Yerdon

NHL.com

March 20, 2015

**BUFFALO** -- Steve Bernier hadn't scored a goal in 14 games. He ended his drought in a big way to help the New Jersey Devils win their third straight game.

Bernier scored twice in 4:45 in the second period, including a milestone goal, to lead the Devils to a 3-1 victory against the Buffalo Sabres at First Niagara Center on Friday.

New Jersey (31-29-11) is 10-3-2 in its past 15 games.

Bernier scored for the first time since Feb. 14 when he made it 1-0 at 9:08 of the second period on a 2-on-1 with Scott Gomez against Sabres defenseman Andre Benoit. Gomez sent a pass by a sprawled-out Benoit, and Bernier tapped it past Sabres goalie Anders Lindback.

"It's been 14 games but I thought we've been playing well," Bernier said. "I never worry about that stuff, but it's always nice to get one out of the way, for sure. But I think it was a great effort by everybody tonight."

Bernier scored his second of the game with 6:07 left in the second period. He put a rebound of an Adam Henrique shot from the side of the net past Lindback for his 12th goal of the season, the 100th of his career.

"He's been playing so well, I don't think we worry about scoring," Devils interim co-coach Lou Lamoriello said. "He's been playing consistently well all year. When you do the job he did, especially when you saw him in the second period, when he took the hit on the boards just to make the outlet pass, I mean, that's what he's been doing. To get him rewarded with goals is great."

Henrique, who has a four-game point streak (two goals, three assists), and Gomez each had two assists.

"I think the whole team had chances, but certainly [Gomez] made the plays that he can make," Lamoriello said. "He has that knack with that puck and he knows when to give it; a couple of great passes."

Jordin Tootoo gave the Devils a 3-0 lead with his ninth goal, his most since he scored 11 with the Nashville Predators in 2007-08. Tootoo broke into the Sabres zone and slid the puck ahead of Buffalo defenseman Mike Weber to get by him and took a wrist shot that beat Lindback low past his left pad.

"That was a great goal," Lamoriello said. "That's what he's been doing all year as far as just the way he exploded coming out of the zone. I think if you saw the bench, they were as excited as he was."

Buffalo (20-44-7) has won once in its past nine games (1-6-2).

Matt Moulson ended Devils goalie Keith Kinkaid's shutout bid with his 11th goal at 11:41 of the third period. Moulson put a rebound of a Tyler Ennis slap shot past Kinkaid, ending the Devils' shutout streak at 125:35.

"It's tough to get things going," Moulson said. "They really play a smart game and try to smother you in their own end and not give you much inside. I think that second period we got a bunch of chances. We didn't play well in the first at all, but we got a bunch of chances in the second and don't capitalize, and they come down and capitalize on theirs. In the NHL you've got to find ways to beat teams no matter how they play."

It was Kinkaid's first road win in the NHL.

"The time goes slow in the third period when you have the shutout," Kinkaid said. "I thought I had that one. I guess I saved it and it was right on the goal line, and Moulson put it in. I thought it was a good save and I ended up in the corner, basically."

New Jersey defeated the Pittsburgh Penguins 2-0 on Tuesday. The Devils had not allowed a goal since Shane Doan scored for the Arizona Coyotes at 6:06 of the third period of New Jersey's 4-1 win last Saturday.

"I think our goaltending has been consistent the last 30 games," Lamoriello said. "I don't think that either one of them have had a night off with the way they've played."

Kinkaid made 28 saves, and Lindback 24.

It was the sixth time this season the Sabres outshot an opponent.

"They're kind of boring, they kind of lull you to sleep, or they try to, at least," Ennis said. "They kind of wait for a turnover. ... We turned one over, and they got on the board."

Sabres forward Johan Larsson thought he scored 7:05 into the first period, but after video review, it was determined he directed the puck into the net with a distinct kicking motion on the rebound of Rasmus Ristolainen's shot.

"I saw the kicking motion; it was almost like a soccer kick," Kinkaid said. "Good thing we have video review and we bounced back after that."

Devils forward Mike Cammalleri missed the game with an illness. He was replaced in the lineup by Martin Havlat. Cammalleri left the Devils' morning skate early and was sent back to their hotel.

"After not playing the number of games, [Havlat] did an outstanding job going in there," Lamoriello said. "We've been very fortunate with our players who haven't been in the lineup; when they've gone in, they've done the job."

The Sabres recalled forward Mikhail Grigorenko on Friday and sent forward Tim Schaller and defenseman Chad Ruhwedel to Rochester of the American Hockey League. Grigorenko played 8:09, the least ice time of any player.

"Right now, guys are vying for jobs, and (we're) seeing how they respond," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "You look at Larsson, he's made a good name for himself and really taken advantage of it. (Philip) Varone's doing it. Grigorenko, his first game here (since March 6), he has to learn how to do that also."

## **Predators need bounce-back effort vs. Sabres**

By Robby Stanley

NHL.com

March 21, 2015

**SABRES (20-44-7) at PREDATORS (43-21-8)**

**TV: MSG-B, BELL TV, FS-TN**

**NASHVILLE** -- The Nashville Predators hope to get back to their winning ways at home against the Buffalo Sabres on Saturday at Bridgestone Arena.

The Predators are winless in five consecutive home games after starting the season 26-3-1 at Bridgestone Arena before that stretch.

Nashville played 15 games in February and has played nine in March. After a 3-2 overtime loss to the Minnesota Wild on Tuesday, Nashville had three consecutive days without a game for the first time since the All-Star break.

"I think we had one of the worst schedules," Predators forward Mike Ribeiro said. "Saying that, I think we would have liked a better record than we did. We still finished above .500, but it was pretty tough. We've had some time here to rest and get some practice. We didn't practice much for the last two months, so it's nice to have a chance to practice and go through our power play, special teams, go through our systems and just kind of review before the end of the season here with 10 games left."

Nashville will try to start playing playoff-style hockey against Buffalo on Saturday with only 10 games remaining in the season. The Predators had a nine-point lead on the St. Louis Blues for first place in the Central Division on Feb. 24 but are now two points behind.

"Usually when you're trying to battle for a spot, I think when there's 25 games left or 30, that's when you're in playoff mode," Ribeiro said. "For us, I think we have to. We had a tough schedule, but right now I think it's going to be a good schedule for us. We have a chance just to get some wins and get on a roll here before the end of the season."

The Predators will be without forwards Colin Wilson and Eric Nystrom, who have lower-body injuries, and forward James Neal, who has an upper-body injury. They recalled forward Viktor Arvidsson from the Milwaukee Admirals of the American Hockey League, and he's expected to make his NHL debut against the Sabres.

"I'm sure he's going to be excited," Predators coach Peter Laviolette said. "He's had a great year down in the minors. He's put up a lot of points for our minor league team. Had he been there the whole year, he probably would have led the American Hockey League in shots on net. He was a guy that we noticed [in training camp] early."

Buffalo lost 3-1 to the New Jersey Devils on Friday. Forward Matt Moulson scored the only goal for the Sabres and goaltender Anders Lindback made 24 saves.

Nashville won 2-1 in a shootout against Buffalo in their first game on Feb. 22. Rookie forward Filip Forsberg scored the deciding goal in the shootout.

Here are the projected lineups:

### **SABRES**

Matt Moulson – Johan Larsson – Tyler Ennis

Marcus Foligno – Philip Varone – Brian Gionta

Nicolas Deslauriers – Mikhail Grigorenko – Cody Hodgson

Jerry D'Amigo – Matt Ellis – Zac Dalpe  
Mike Weber – Rasmus Ristolainen  
Nikita Zadorov – Andrej Meszaros  
Andre Benoit – Tyson Strachan  
Matt Hackett  
Anders Lindback

Scratched: None

Injured: Zach Bogosian (lower body), Zemgus Girgensons (lower body), Josh Gorges (lower body), Patrick Kaleta (lower body), Chad Johnson (lower body), Cody McCormick (blood clots), Evander Kane (shoulder)

## **PREDATORS**

Viktor Arvidsson – Mike Ribeiro – Gabriel Bourque  
Matt Cullen – Mike Fisher – Craig Smith  
Filip Forsberg – Calle Jarnkrok – Viktor Stalberg  
Taylor Beck – Paul Gaustad – Mike Santorelli  
Roman Josi – Shea Weber  
Seth Jones – Cody Franson  
Mattias Ekholm – Ryan Ellis  
Pekka Rinne  
Carter Hutton

Scratched: Victor Bartley, Anton Volchenkov

Injured: James Neal (upper body), Eric Nystrom (lower body), Colin Wilson (lower body)

**Status report:** The Sabres did not hold a morning skate. ... Rinne was the first goaltender off the ice at the morning skate and is expected to start. ... Wilson sustained a lower-body injury at practice Thursday and is listed as day-to-day.

**Who's hot:** Ennis has five points in the past five games and leads the Sabres with 39 points. ... Josi has three goals and one assist in the past three games and leads Predators defensemen with 51 points.

## **Predators end home woes, shut out Sabres**

By Robby Stanley

NHL.com

March 21, 2015

**NASHVILLE** -- Pekka Rinne made 22 saves and recorded his fourth shutout of the season in the Nashville Predators' 3-0 win against the Buffalo Sabres at Bridgestone Arena on Saturday.

Nashville (44-21-8), which won at home for the first time in its past six games, tied the St. Louis Blues for first place in the Central Division.

"The last stretch here, we've lost some games in the third period," Rinne said. "It's been a little bit of a topic that we've been talking about, so for sure it's nice to finish strong and not give up a goal or anything like that. Just do it the right way."

Buffalo (20-44-7) is 1-7-2 in its past 10 games. Matt Hackett made 40 saves.

"They're a very good team," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "For us to keep battling and fight through and do what we did, especially in that third period, we had a number of scoring chances. We hit the goal post twice and [Tyler Ennis] had a couple of breakaways, so I can't fault these guys for the effort for sure."

The Predators had three consecutive days without playing a game for the first time since the All-Star break.

"There's no question that the rest helped," Nashville coach Peter Laviolette said. "The schedule is the schedule and we're not going to complain about it. There's 27 games, I think there was, in 49 days, whatever it was, and we went 13-11-3. It's not a great record.

"There was just no opportunity to get work in in practice and really probably not get enough rest either, but everybody's dealt with that. Everybody's got to play 82 games somehow some way, no matter whether it's tough at the beginning or tough at the end, tough in the middle, it doesn't matter. Everybody's got the same hand dealt to them."

Taylor Beck gave the Predators a 1-0 lead at 14:52 of the second period on a power-play goal. Defenseman Shea Weber took the original shot from the point and Beck redirected it past Hackett for his seventh goal of the season. The Predators' power play was 4-for-46 in the past 15 games before Beck's goal.

"We've been struggling a little bit lately, and we wanted to get a lot of pucks to the net," Beck said. "Fortunate enough, (Weber) got a good shot off, and I got a tip on it. That stuff happens every once in a while."

Craig Smith made it 2-0 at 5:49 of the third period on a rebound. Hackett made a pad save on the shot by Ryan Ellis and Smith shot the rebound into an open net for his 23rd goal of the season.

Mike Fisher gave the Predators a 3-0 lead at 15:01 of the third period on a wrist shot from the slot. Forward Viktor Stalberg made the pass from behind the net and Fisher took a shot that beat Hackett on the stick side for his 17th goal of the season.

"I thought that we didn't really change anything," Rinne said. "We just tried to keep it going, tried to score the next goal. I like that aspect of our game. We always want to score that next goal, and that's what happened in the third and it obviously gave us more breathing room. I'm happy with how we finished the game. We didn't sit back or anything like that."

Predators forward Matt Cullen had two assists. He has four assists in the past four games.

Nashville forward Viktor Arvidsson made his debut and played on the top line with Mike Ribeiro and Gabriel Bourque.

"It's been a while since we won here," Ellis said. "To come out with that performance and Pekka back to how he was playing earlier in the year, it was huge for us. We've just got to keep going. The next one is Tuesday (against the Montreal Canadiens), and it's just as important as this one."

## **Sabres goalie Lindback expected to start vs. Stars**

NHL.com

March 22, 2015

**SABRES (20-45-7) at STARS (34-28-10)**

**TV: MSG-B, BELL TV, FS-SW**

**Season series:** The Buffalo Sabres defeated the Dallas Stars 3-2 at American Airlines Center on Feb. 7. Zemgus Girgensons scored what ended up being the game-winning goal at 5:59 of the second period when he put Buffalo ahead 3-0. Jhonas Enroth, now the Stars' backup goalie, made 38 saves for the Sabres.

**Sabres team scope:** Buffalo has lost two in a row and nine of 10 (1-7-2) following a 3-0 loss to the Nashville Predators on Saturday. It was the 12th time the Sabres have been shut out this season. Goalie Anders Lindback might make his first start against Dallas since the Stars traded him and a conditional third-round pick in the 2016 NHL Draft to the Sabres for Enroth on Feb. 11. He is 1-4-2 with a .930 save percentage in eight games with Buffalo. Matt Hackett made 40 saves in the loss to Nashville; it was his first start since March 7. Forward Matt Moulson has five points (two goals) over the past six games, and forward Brian Gionta has an assist in three of the past four. The Sabres have scored 127 non-shootout goals (1.76 per game), 16 fewer than the 29th-ranked Arizona Coyotes entering Sunday.

**Stars team scope:** Dallas has won five of six following a 4-0 victory against the Chicago Blackhawks on Saturday. Goalie Kari Lehtonen made 33 saves for his fifth shutout this season and 32nd of his career. This is the last of a four-game homestand for the Stars, who are eight points behind the Winnipeg Jets for the second wild card into the Stanley Cup Playoffs in the Western Conference with 10 games left. "We put ourselves in a tough spot," coach Lindy Ruff said. "It's going to be agonizing, but we just have to keep taking care of our own end. We can't do anything about Winnipeg winning. Our responsibility is to just take it a game at a time and be ready to win games." Forward Tyler Seguin, who scored on a power play against Chicago, has four goals in seven games since returning from a knee injury.

## **Merrimack's Schaller focused on improving**

By Doug Alden

New Hampshire Union Leader

March 22, 2015

Tim Schaller knows one of his biggest strengths is his knack for learning.

Schaller has been splitting time this season between the AHL's Rochester Americans and the Buffalo Sabres, soaking in everything he can while trying to climb his way to something more permanent.

"I take a mental note on everything I need to be better at," Schaller said. "You can talk to anybody in the NHL and they still think they can get better."

Schaller got another difficult lesson Friday when the Sabres sent him back to Rochester. It was the end of an extended stay with the Sabres, who have been besieged by injuries and called up Schaller for his longest stint with the parent club this season.

Schaller played in seven games for Buffalo this month, including a St. Patrick's Day visit to Boston with plenty of family and friends making the trip from his hometown of Merrimack to see him play the Bruins.

It was the second time Schaller faced the team he followed as a kid. His first will forever be a highlight no matter where his career goes from here. Depleted by injuries and illness, the Sabres recalled Schaller on Dec. 21 in time for him to join the team that night in Boston.

Bob and Susan Schaller headed down from Merrimack to see their 24-year-old son play in just his third NHL game. And less than two minutes into the third period, Schaller beat Boston goalie Tuukka Rask on a wraparound for his first goal in the NHL.

"That was the highlight of my career - hands down. I didn't know what to with myself when I scored," said Schaller, who gave the puck to his parents after the game. "It was a pretty emotional moment there for everyone. It was one of those things where it was going to happen eventually. I couldn't have asked for a better spot for it to happen."

The goal gave the Sabres a 3-2 lead, but the Bruins rallied to win 4-3 in overtime. Schaller was back in the Sabres lineup on Tuesday and although he didn't score again, he and his teammates got to celebrate a rare victory after Buffalo edged Boston 2-1 in a shootout.

"I try to make it just another game. I actually had more people in the stands than last game," he said. "You know they're there, but you try and focus in on the game."

Schaller was hoping to finish out the season with Buffalo, but got the news Friday that he was headed back to Rochester to be with the Americans during a weekend swing through Utica and Toronto.

Buffalo coach Ted Nolan said after Tuesday's win in Boston that Schaller had been impressive each time the Sabres have called upon him this season, just his second as a professional.

"He probably would have spent a little bit more time in the American League, but because of our injuries he's been getting force-fed and he's taking advantage of it," Nolan said.

Nolan said Schaller has had a few rookie mistakes, but always learns where he went wrong and - most importantly - does not do it again.

"He learns fast," Nolan said. "He's a great student of the game and he's going to do well."

Schaller's studies actually delayed the start of his professional career. He was an undrafted free agent when he signed an entry-level contract with the Sabres in April 2013. Rather than report immediately, Schaller finished his studies at Providence College and graduated the following month with a degree in social science.

Schaller played four seasons at Providence and was an alternate captain as a senior. He spent all of last season with Rochester and was the top goal scorer among Americans rookies with 11. He was also fifth overall in points and his teammates voted him most improved player.

Schaller opened this season with the Americans, then got a game-day call-up from Buffalo on Nov. 29 and played his first NHL game that night with the Sabres in Montreal.

Schaller has played 13 games with the Sabres and has one goal and one assist, which he picked up Monday in a shootout loss to the Washington Capitals. He was up with the Sabres for two games in January, then back to Rochester until getting recalled on March 3 after another cycle of injuries hit the Sabres.

Schaller knew it may be a limited assignment and said he was trying to make the most of it.

"I've been given a pretty good opportunity here and I try and make the best of it every night just staying consistent," he said. "My dream is coming true here. I just want to be here as long as I can."

## **Steve Bernier earns new claim to fame in Devils' win over Sabres**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
March 20, 2015

BUFFALO – During a 17-game run with the Sabres late in 2007-08, Steve Bernier mustered only three goals, two of which he scored in his first game. The winger mostly disappeared after that, and he was quietly traded to Vancouver months later.

Mention Bernier's name around some Sabres fans, and inevitably someone will bring up his rollicking debut.

Now, after Bernier's two-goal performance Friday in the New Jersey Devils' 3-1 win against the Sabres, the 29-year-old might have a new claim to fame in these parts.

Many of the Sabres' rabid fans want their team to lose and stay in 30<sup>th</sup> place, so Bernier delivered for them by ending a 14-game goal drought with his 99<sup>th</sup> and 100<sup>th</sup> NHL scores.

"They've been playing good," Bernier said about the Sabres. "I think we played well, a very good, patient game tonight. We were able to limit their scoring chances."

Still, the Sabres generated some chances before the announced sellout crowd of 19,070 fans inside the First Niagara Center, pumping 29 shots on New Jersey backup goalie Keith Kinkaid. In fact, they outshot an opponent for only the sixth time in 71 games.

The Sabres appeared to open the scoring 7:05 into the game, but replay officials ruled Johan Larsson kicked the puck into the net.

"I saw the puck and I tried to stop," Larsson said. "I think I had my skate in the air."

A lead could've changed the game.

"You get a lead on New Jersey, it's a different game," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "When you try to go from behind, they clog up the middle. It's going to be a pretty boring game."

The game, the Sabres' eighth loss in nine outings (1-6-2), was *really* boring.

"They're a veteran team, they're a smart team," Nolan said. "They sit back and wait for that mistake, and once you make a mistake, they capitalize on it. That was their game plan coming in. That's what they waited for."

Sabres winger Tyler Ennis added: "They're kind of boring, they kind of lull you to sleep, or they try to at least."

Bernier scored 9:08 into the second period, capitalizing after the Sabres' Nick Deslauriers couldn't corral Cody Hodgson's pass high in the New Jersey zone. Bernier beat Sabres goalie Anders Lindback again at 13:53.

Jordin Tootoo's third-period goal iced it. Matt Moulson's power-play score ruined Kinkaid's bid for his first NHL shutout 11:41 into the third period.

Prior to the game, the Sabres recalled center Mikhail Grigorenko from Rochester for the sixth time this season and possibly the last time ever. The 20-year-old skated a game-low eight minutes, nine seconds between Deslauriers and Cody Hodgson.

Why did the Sabres summon Grigorenko, the 12<sup>th</sup> pick in 2012?

"Just to give him a look, see how he's progressing," Nolan said. "Right now, guys are vying for jobs and (we're) seeing how they respond. You look at Larsson, he's made a good name for himself and really taken advantage of it. Phil Varone's doing it. Grigorenko, his first game here, he has to learn how to do that also."

Nolan added: "He's just got to be better."

In his last appearance March 6, Grigorenko started on the second line before getting demoted early in the Sabres' 3-2 loss in Ottawa. The Sabres sent him down the next day. Nolan later blasted Grigorenko's effort, saying, "He didn't have any energy or urgency in his game whatsoever."

Grigorenko has compiled only one goal and two points in 14 outings this season.

Nolan wasn't sure if Grigorenko would stay up. The Sabres play tonight in Nashville. Nolan said goalie Matt Hackett will likely start against the Predators.

The Sabres also sent center Tim Schaller and defenseman Chad Ruhwedel down before the game. Andrej Meszaros returned from a hand injury, so Ruhwedel had to be sent down.

## **Sabres goalie Anders Lindback possesses elite puck-handling ability**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
March 20, 2015

BUFFALO – In Europe, handling the puck is “not a big thing for the goalies,” Sabres newcomer Anders Lindback said.

The bigger rink allows them to sling it and almost act as a third defenseman. European ice surfaces don't have those pesky trapezoids designed to keep goalies in their net, either.

Handling the puck on the smaller North American ice surface with restrictions is difficult for NHL goalies. Very few do it well.

The 6-foot-6 Lindback is one of the best.

The Swede has been moving out of the net and passing the puck all over in his eight appearances with the Sabres, stretching the ice and helping his defense.

“I keep saying that it's unreal,” defenseman Nikita Zadorov said Friday prior to the Sabres' 3-1 loss to the New Jersey Devils inside the First Niagara Center. “I've never seen the goalie handle the puck like a real player, and I think it's easy for us. We have less pressure, less bobbling the puck off the boards.”

Lindback's ability to move the puck means his defensemen chase it and carry it less.

“It's nice to be able to go back, just kind of fan off to the corners and know he's going to make a play with it,” Sabres defenseman Mike Weber said. “That's a big help, because he kind of draws some players away from us. So it gives us a little extra time to make a breakout.”

Naturally, players had to adjust to Lindback's style.

“We've had goalies that are more come out, stop it, leave it for us,” Weber said.

In fact, the Sabres haven't had a goalie with Lindback's supreme puck-moving ability since Darcy Wakaluk in the early 1990s or Tom Barrasso in the late 1980s.

Those kind of goalies can change a game. Sabres coach Ted Nolan used to game plan around legendary Devils goalie Martin Brodeur.

“You had to change the game plan to keep the puck away from him because he was so good with the puck,” Nolan said. “Lindback, I don't know if he's that good, but he handles the puck extremely well and ... our defensemen, now they don't have to go back and peel off. If the forwards take away the defense, he can slip the puck up the middle. So he's very, very effective.”

Sabres goalie coach Arturs Irbe, who played 13 NHL seasons, won't tinker with Lindback's style.

“I'm not going to in any shape or form take it away from his game, because teammates love it,” he said. “It takes a lot of pressure away from defensemen, disrupts opposing team's forecheck. Eventually, they are not really willing to dump in the pucks and give it away to Lindy, which makes them think twice what to do in certain game situations, and that buys us more time. So it's a tremendous asset.”

On an anemic team about to break its own dubious record for fewest goals scored in modern NHL history, slick Sabres winger Tyler Ennis had 18 goals entering Friday.

The 25-year-old scored 21 times last season, when the Sabres scored only 150 goals. They had 126 goals through 70 games this season, a pathetic 148-score pace.

Through all the turmoil, through all the losses, Ennis has remained a consistent offensive threat with neophytes feeding him the puck.

"Somebody asked me who's the most consistent player on this team and who's the most valuable player on the team this year? Tyler Ennis by far," Nolan said. "His vision, his dynamic, his intuition with the puck. He darts in and out. He's competitive.

"Scoring 18 goals now – no knock against the centermen they had – but you give him a legitimate, experienced center iceman to feed him some pucks, the sky is the limit for this kid. You look at 18, you can look at 38, 40. The sky's the limit, I really believe."

Nolan shifted Ennis to the point on the power play Monday. After 14 scoreless tries, the Sabres' awful power play had two goals in two games entering Friday.

"I think it changed it drastically," Nolan said about moving Ennis. "Tyler's a dynamic player in this league. When he's on top of his game, he's pretty effective. So back there we have a legitimate quarterback."

## **Bernier, Devils drop Sabres 3-1**

By Dan Cave

WGR 550

March 20, 2015

Steve Bernier snapped a 14-game scoring drought with a pair of goals on Friday, lifting the Devils to a 3-1 win over the Sabres at First Niagara Center. In net, backup goaltender Keith Kinkaid stopped 28 shots for the win while Anders Lindback surrendered three goals on 27 shots.

The Sabres thought they jumped out to the 1-0 lead in the opening period, on what would have been Johan Larsson's fourth goal in six games, however the Buffalo forward kicked the puck into the net and the goal was waved off.

The game remained 0-0 until Steve Bernier redirected a Scott Gomez pass into the Buffalo net at 9:08 of the second. Gomez slid the puck toward the crease where a wide-open Bernier tapped it home for the 1-0 lead. Bernier's second goal of the evening came later in the period, a rebound kicked right to him by Anders Lindback, putting the Devils ahead 2-0.

Jordin Tootoo upped the lead to 3-0 in the third, cutting around Mike Weber and sliding the puck past Lindback for his ninth of the season. Matt Moulson's power play goal about three and a half minutes later put Buffalo on the board for the first time. Tyler Ennis' blast squeezed through Kinkaid, stopping short of the goalline, but Moulson swooped in to stuff the loose puck home. The Devils hung on the rest of the way for their third straight win.

The Sabres travel to Nashville to face the Predators on Saturday. Hear all the action at 8 p.m. on WGR 550 and the Buffalo Sabres Radio Network.

### **1st Period**

#### **Goals**

None

#### **Penalties**

3:11 - NJ - Damon Severson (2 min., holding)

19:35 - NJ - Andy Greene (2 min., hooking)

### **2nd Period**

#### **Goals**

9:08 - NJ - Steve Bernier (11) (Scott Gomez, Adam Henrique)

13:53 - NJ - Steve Bernier (12) (Adam Henrique, Scott Gomez)

#### **Penalties**

None

### **3rd Period**

#### **Goals**

8:14 - NJ - Jordin Tootoo (9) (Unassisted)

11:41 - BUF - Matt Moulson (11) (PPG) (Tyler Ennis, Brian Gionta)

#### **Penalties**

10:43 - NJ - Dainius Zubrus (2 min., hooking)

13:20 - BUF - Johan Larsson (2 min. bench penalty - too many men on the ice)

14:50 - NJ - Jacob Josefson (2 min., hooking)

18:16 - BUF - Rasmus Ristolainen (2 min., holding the stick)

### **Goaltending**

NJ - Keith Kinkaid (28 saves, 29 shots)

BUF - Anders Lindback (24 saves, 27 shots)

**Power Plays**

NJ - 0 of 2

BUF - 1 of 4

**Three Stars**

1.) NJ - Steve Bernier (2 G, 0 A)

2.) NJ - Keith Kinkaid (28 saves)

3.) NJ - Adam Henrique (0 G, 2 A)

## **Hamilton: Sabres and Devils play another defensive game**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 20, 2015

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- The Devils always seem to bring a defensive style to their games and Friday's 3-1 win in Buffalo was no exception. New Jersey pounced on Sabres mistakes and held Buffalo off the rest of the way for their third straight victory.

The Sabres had the better of the play early on, but still left the first period scoreless. Buffalo thought it had a goal when Rasmus Ristolainen's shot was stopped by Keith Kinkaid. Matt Moulson missed the rebound, but Johan Larsson couldn't get his stick loose so he kicked it in. The goal went to video review and was disallowed.

"Risto shot it and the rebound came out," said Larsson about his waved-off goal. "I saw the puck and I tried to stop. I think I had my skate in the air."

"That was probably the turning point, when Larsson's goal was disallowed," said Ted Nolan. "You get a lead on New Jersey, it's a different game. But when you try to go from behind on them, they clog up the middle and it gets to be a pretty boring game. But it's effective for them."

Before Larsson's non-goal, Marcus Foligno had a partial breakaway, during which he was hindered by Damon Severson. Severson got the penalty, but Foligno stayed strong and tried to bull the puck in. Kinkaid went into the net, but kept his left pad -- and the puck -- out.

Ristolainen was very active in the offensive zone in the first period and made a great defensive play with Lindback down and out knocking the puck away from Adam Henrique. Ristolainen led the Sabres with 8:19 of ice time after 20 minutes. He did make one bad turnover at the Jersey blue line, but Martin Havlat led a 2-on-1 and hit the post.

Brian Gionta was set up by Cody Hodgson in the slot and ripped a one-timer wide against his former team. Shots were at a minimum in the first with Kinkaid making seven saves and Lindback five.

Six minutes into the second period, Lindback made his toughest save of the game as Michael Ryder walked in, but the Buffalo goaltender got his left pad on it.

New Jersey finally opened the scoring, taking advantage of a 2-on-1. Tyson Strachan sprawled, but didn't take away the Scott Gomez pass, giving Steve Bernier the wide open lay-up. Shortly after, Lindback had to stop Stephen Gionta on a breakaway and Brian's brother went hard into the end wall. He did get back to the bench on his own after being looked at.

Bernier got his second goal when Lindback knocked Henrique's off angle shot right to Bernier who scored his 12th of the season. After two periods, Kinkaid had 20 saves while Lindback had 13.

In the third, Mike Weber was bent over and went to the locker room. He returned, but couldn't keep up with Jordon Tootoo who went around him with speed and beat Lindback for his ninth.

"They try to lull you to sleep," said Ennis about the Devils. "They're boring. They wait for those turnovers and they capitalize on them, and that's what they did. We turned one over and it ended up in the back of our net. They're a really good defensive team, so they shut the door."

Buffalo broke the shutout on the power play when Tyler Ennis took an off-angle blast that got through Kinkaid. Matt Moulson was right there to tap in only his second power play goal of the season.

The Devils got their first power play of the game late in the third period and gave up a 2-on-1 to the shorthanded Sabres, but Brian Gionta's slapshot sailed wide. New Jersey hung on the rest of the way, giving Kinkaid the win

with 28 saves. Lindback finished with 24 for the Sabres, who hit the road to face Nashville on Saturday.

Following the game, Nolan noted that Matt Hackett will "probably" be in net to face the Predators.

## **Predators prevail 3-0 over Sabres**

By Dan Cave

WGR 550

March 21, 2015

Pekka Rinne kept the Sabres out of the net on Saturday, coming up with a 24-save shutout in a 3-0 Predators win over Buffalo. Matt Hackett kept the Sabres in the game with 40 stops, but took his third loss of the season.

Making his first start since being chased from net in Washington, Hackett faced heavy pressure in the first period but was up to the task, stopping all 17 Nashville shots. The Predators finally broke through at 14:52 of the second on Taylor Beck's power play goal. Beck got his stick on Shea Weber's blast right off the faceoff for the 1-0 Nashville lead.

Craig Smith put the Predators ahead 2-0 early in the third period, slamming a big Ryan Ellis rebound past Hackett. Smith's goal capped a 3-on-1 break that started when Nikita Zadorov broke his stick in the Nashville zone. The Buffalo defenseman tossed his stick aside and skated toward the bench. Nashville capitalized with the odd-man rush and Mike Fisher put it away with his 17th of the season, a wristshot from the slot at 15:01 of the third.

Buffalo had a handful of chances to get on the board, but Rinne was up to the task, stopping both Jerry D'Amigo and Tyler Ennis on third-period breakaways. Rinne also robbed Cody Hodgson with a beautiful glove save late, keeping the Sabres off the board. At the other end, Hackett performed admirably, coming up with several big stops of his own, but Nashville's pressure proved to be too much.

The Sabres are now winless in nine out of their last 10 and head to Dallas on Monday. Hear the call on WGR 550 and the Sabres Radio Network at 8:30 p.m.

### **1st Period**

#### **Goals**

None

#### **Penalties**

0:31 - NSH - Roman Josi (2 min., interference)

17:50 - NSH - Craig Smith (4 min., double minor, high sticking)

### **2nd Period**

#### **Goals**

14:52 - NSH - Taylor Beck (7) (PPG) (Shea Weber, Matt Cullen)

#### **Penalties**

14:48 - BUF - Johan Larsson (2 min., holding the stick)

### **3rd Period**

#### **Goals**

5:49 - NSH - Craig Smith (23) (Ryan Ellis)

15:01 - NSH - Mike Fisher (17) (Viktor Stalberg, Ryan Ellis)

#### **Penalties**

19:57 - NSH - Mattias Ekholm (2 min., tripping)

### **Goaltending**

BUF - Matt Hackett (40 saves, 43 shots)

NSH - Pekka Rinne (24 saves, 24 shots)

### **Power Plays**

BUF - 0 of 4  
NSH - 1 of 1

## **Hamilton: Sabres trying to play with low energy**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 21, 2015

Nashville, TN (WGR 550) -- Things were pretty even for the first five to seven minutes of the first period, but then Nashville, which has been off for three days, put it into high gear. Mike Santorelli was all over Buffalo early and could have had four goals himself.

Santorelli's first chance came when he came in through the right circle blowing around Andrej Meszaros only to be stopped by Matt Hackett. Right after that, Santorelli was wide open in the slot, but Hackett stopped the backhand.

Near the end of the period, Taylor Beck came through the right circle and Hackett got across to deny Santorelli's rebound attempt. All this came in just 3:36 of work. Buffalo had maybe one decent chance on Pekka Rinne on a Matt Moulson tip.

Craig Smith whacked Jerry D'Amigo on the side of the head with his stick causing quite a bit of blood. That drew a four minute penalty near the end of the first. Rinne made a save on Meszaros and Cody Hodgson fanned on the open rebound. Hackett had 17 saves in the first period while Rinne had six.

Mikhail Grigorenko had a real nice shift in the second period, he came through the right circle and just missed shooting wide. He then went into the corner and won a battle and found Hodgson alone, but his one-timer was blocked.

Right after that Hodgson found Marcus Foligno alone in the right circle, but he fanned with quite a bit of net open.

Buffalo gave Nashville its first power play when Johan Larsson grabbed Shea Weber's stick in the offensive zone. It took four seconds for the Preds to score. Mike Fisher won the faceoff, Weber ripped a shot that was tipped in by Taylor Beck. Right after the goal, Hackett had to make a great save on Mike Ribeiro.

Brian Gionta was the one that lost the draw to Fisher on the goal and he had a great chance to get it back as he stole the puck in the left circle and shot wide on Rinne.

After two periods Rinne had 13 saves while Hackett had 29.

In the third, Matt Moulson set up Tyler Ennis for a great chance, but Rinne came up big.

Nashville's second goal came when Nikita Zadorov broke his stick at the left point and just tossed it away in anger and went toward the bench. Ryan Ellis saw this and jumped up to lead a 3-on-1. Ellis ripped a bullet that Hackett stopped, but the rebound went to Craig Smith who tapped home his 23rd.

Following the game, Ted Nolan was not happy with Zadorov. "He's been doing that for quite some time, and right now...that's enough."

"[Zadorov's] gotta mature," Nolan continued. "Sooner or later, I mean...I don't know how many times you gotta be told to put your stick on the ice, how many times you gotta stop, how many times you gotta finish your hit, how many times you gotta play with some energy. You keep doing it over and over and over again, but maybe one day he'll learn."

With about eight minutes left, D'Amigo, who had returned from the big cut he received in the first period, got behind the D, but Rinne just got a piece of it. Grigorenko came down the slot and beat Rinne, but hit the post.

Right after that the Larsson line had all sort of pressure and Rinne made numerous saves on Andre Benoit and

Ennis. Rinne absolutely robbed Ennis on the backhand and #63 just looked at the sky in frustration. Meszaros then came in clean down the slot and hit the post. It was at least a minute of pressure, but Nashville got it out, went down and Mike Fisher scored to make it 3-0.

You could really tell the Sabres played in Buffalo last night and the Preds had three days off. Nashville was skating well from start to finish, while Buffalo had no energy.

"We had a tough one on [Friday]," said Ennis. "Back-to-backs are always hard, but those aren't excuses. [Nashville] is a good team. It's a tough place to play and they played hard."

Hackett kept the Sabres in the game for the much of the evening and finished with 40 saves while Rinne stopped all 24 for the shutout. "If it wasn't for [Rinne], it could have been a little bit different," said Nolan.

The Sabres head coach was also pleased with the way his own netminder played. "I thought he was good," Nolan said about Hackett. "He gave us a chance. For a kid who sat on the bench for the last couple weeks, patiently waiting. We had a chance to work with him these last couple days to get him prepped for this game and it wasn't an easy game to play. They have some good shooters on the other team so I thought he played real well."

## **Sabres' Grigorenko showed some life in Nashville**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 22, 2015

Dallas, TX (WGR 550) -- Mikhail Grigorenko was just muddling through the game in Nashville like he normally does when in the second period he got loose through the right faceoff circle, he took a dangerous shot and then went behind the net to win a battle. The Russian found a wide open Cody Hodgson, but his shot was blocked.

After that play, it seemed like he got a shot of confidence and created some offense in the third period. He had a great opportunity on Pekka Rinne in the slot and beat him, but hit the post.

Ted Nolan had been very vocal about Grigorenko's poor play his last three or four games up, but heaped praise on him Saturday.

Grigorenko had said how excited he was to be back a few weeks ago and then proceeded to play some of his worst hockey. It made me wonder if he was nervous or putting too much pressure on himself, "There's a little bit of pressure, but at the same time I just try to play my game and just trying to work hard, keep my feet moving. It hasn't worked out yet, but I've just got to keep working hard and try to play my game."

Grigorenko has been hard pressed to earn his ice-time and that can cause some frustration, "For sure at times, but at the same time you watch video and you've got to analyze your game and you understand where you make mistakes and where you should do something different, so sometimes you get frustrated, but that's just after a game and then it's a new day, new game and you look forward to it."

In the NHL if you don't produce you sit. Against New Jersey he had eight minutes and was minus two. Grigorenko said, something has to happen, "I try to skate my best, I try to get a couple of hits there, but we had two goals scored on us and you can't expect more minutes after allowing a couple of goals, so hopefully I start games good and take it shift by shift, so I can get the coach's trust and get more ice time."

Grigorenko feels he's learned a lot in Rochester, but he also feels he's ready to show what he can do in the NHL. He'd like to finish out the season here, but he knows it's not a sure thing, "I need to do something to deserve it and to earn it, but the more time you spend here around the locker room with the guys and with the team, you get more comfortable and that's when you get more confidence and stuff like this so obviously I'd love to stay here for the rest of the year and the rest of my life." Grigorenko added, "Playing in the NHL is my dream, I want to play here for as long as I can, so hopefully I'll be able to have a good career and will do everything I can to do so."

The Sabres were off in Dallas on Sunday and will play the Stars Monday night.

## **This week in the race for 30th**

By Howard Simon

WGR 550

March 23, 2015

10 games. That's what is left in the Sabres season. The race for 30th and a guarantee of getting Connor McDavid or Jack Eichel is down to 10 games and might be decided by two critical head to head matchups between the Sabres and Arizona Coyotes four days apart.

The two teams are doing their absolute best to finish last. Buffalo is 1-7-2 in their last 10 games and have scored just 14 goals, not including the shootout winning goal in Boston. The power play is 3 for its last 27. Despite good goaltending play, the Sabres have given up three or more goals in nine of their last 11 games.

Arizona, on the other hand, looks to be out-tanking the Sabres. The Coyotes have lost eight in a row and are 1-17-1 in their last 19 starts. The Coyotes have scored a grand total of 23 goals in those 19 games while being outscored 64-23. Arizona hasn't won a game in regulation since February 3rd.

A team having a 1-17-1 stretch might be hard to believe but remember, the Sabres had an identical stretch from mid December to the end of January.

### **Here are the updated standings going into tonight's action:**

Buffalo 47 points(10 games left)

Arizona 50 points(9)

Edmonton 53 points(10)

### **Here is the schedule for the week:**

Buffalo: Tonight at Dallas, Thursday vs Arizona, Saturday at Colorado

Arizona: Tuesday at Detroit, Thursday at Buffalo, Saturday at Pittsburgh

Edmonton: Tonight vs Winnipeg, Wednesday vs Colorado, Friday vs Dallas

### **Here is a breakdown of remaining schedules:**

Buffalo will play 5 home games and 5 on the road. 5 will be against Eastern Conference teams and 5 are versus Western clubs. They will play 3 teams that currently hold down a playoff spot and have 2 back to back sets left.

Arizona has 3 home games and 6 on the road. There are 4 against the East and 5 against the West. 5 of their remaining 9 opponents are in a playoff spot right now and the Coyotes have 1 back to back set.

Edmonton will play 6 of their final 10 games at home. All 10 games will be versus Western teams. The Oilers face 4 teams in a playoff spot right now and have 1 back to back set.

## **Bernier nets pair as Devils defeat Sabres**

By Mark Ludwiczak  
The Sports Xchange  
March 20, 2015

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- Right winger Steve Bernier was rewarded for his hard work Friday night with a pair of goals and a new personal milestone.

The rugged forward scored twice in the second period to lead the New Jersey Devils to a 3-1 victory over the Buffalo Sabres. Bernier's second goal was the 100th of his career.

Bernier ended a 14-game goal drought and helped make up for the loss of New Jersey's top two scorers. Left winger Mike Cammalleri (illness) and center Patrick Elias (back spasms) were unable to play against Buffalo.

"I didn't even know he didn't have a goal in 14 games," Devils general manager Lou Lamoriello said. "He's been playing so well I don't think we worry about scoring. He's been playing consistently well all year. ... To get him rewarded with goals is great."

Right winger Jordin Tootoo also scored for the Devils (31-29-11). Goalie Keith Kinkaid made 28 saves.

Bernier opened the scoring 9:08 into the second period on a tap-in in front of the Sabres net. Following a nice setup from Devils center Scott Gomez and some questionable Sabres defending by defensemen Tyson Strachan and Andre Benoit, Bernier had an easy finish.

Bernier's second goal came five minutes later. After Lindback stopped a chance by Devils center Adam Henrique, the rebound fell right to Bernier, who had another tap-in.

Bernier made sure to keep the puck from his 100th goal.

"I thought it was important to get it," Bernier said. "It's been 14 games but I thought we've been playing well. I never worry about that stuff but it's always nice to get one out of the way for sure. But I think it was a great effort by everybody."

New Jersey dominated the flow of play in what was a slow and methodical game. The Devils are 10-3-2 in their last 15 games but still face an uphill battle to try and grab one of the wild-card spots in the Eastern Conference. New Jersey sits 10 points behind ninth-place Boston.

"You wish it would have happened earlier," Bernier said. "There's not much you can do about it right now. Right now what we can do is play our system and try to get better at it every game and I think we've been doing this."

Left winger Matt Moulson scored the lone goal for the Sabres (20-44-7), who have lost eight of their last nine games. Goalie Anders Lindback made 22 saves for Buffalo.

"They clog things up and always capitalize on their opportunities," Moulson said. "That's what they did to us tonight, and I think they sucked a little bit of energy out of us."

Tootoo added some insurance 8:14 into the third period on a strong one-man effort. Tootoo used his speed to skate past Sabres defenseman Mike Weber and beat Lindback with a low shot to the glove side.

"That was a great goal," Lamoriello said. "That's what he's been doing all year as far as just the way he exploded coming out of the zone. I think if you saw the bench, they were as excited as he was."

Buffalo appeared to open the scoring 7:05 into the first period when left winger Johan Larsson put a rebound past Kinkaid. But a video review found that Larsson used a distinct kicking motion with his skate and the goal was overturned.

"You get a lead on New Jersey, it's a different game," Sabres head coach Ted Nolan said. "When you try to go from behind, they clog up the middle. It's going to be a pretty boring game."

Moulson finally got the Sabres on the board with 8:19 remaining in the third period on the power play. After Kinkaid made a terrific save on Buffalo center Tyler Ennis' shot from the left circle, the puck fell to Moulson with an empty net beside him.

NOTES: LW Mike Cammalleri and LW Patrick Elias were scratched for the Devils. Elias missed his third consecutive game because of back spasms and Cammalleri was scratched because of illness. ... D Zach Bogosian (lower body) and G Chad Johnson (lower body) were scratched for the Sabres. ... Before the game, the Sabres recalled C Mikhail Grigorenko from the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League. They also assigned C Tim Schaller and D Chad Ruhwedel back to the Americans. Grigorenko joined the Sabres for the sixth time this season and has 33 points (12 goals, 21 assists) in 40 games with Rochester. ... This was the third and final meeting between the Sabres and Devils this season.

## **Sabres hope to stay hot on the man advantage**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 20, 2015

The Buffalo Sabres will continue to ride the hot hand in goal Friday night.

Anders Lindback will start his fifth-straight game and make his eighth-straight appearance. In seven games played, he has a .934 save percentage and a 2.53 goals-against average for Buffalo.

Defenseman Andrej Meszaros will be back in the lineup for the Sabres after missing the past two games with a hand injury. He originally sustained the injury while gloving down a puck on March 7 in Washington and has dealing with it ever since. The Sabres are set to take on the New Jersey Devils at 7 p.m. from First Niagara Center.

The Tops Game Night pregame show begins at 6:30 p.m. on MSG-B and Bell. The game can also be heard live on WGR 550.

Meszaros will find a spot on the second power-play unit, which will try to match the production Buffalo has seen from the first unit.

With Zach Bogosian out with a lower-body injury, the Sabres coaching staff moved Tyler Ennis to the point on the first unit two games ago and so far, it's paid off.

Ennis and Rasmus Ristolainen have combined for two power-play goals in the past two games. Ristolainen's goal early in the third period on Tuesday tied the game against Boston and set the team up for a victory in the shootout.

"[Assistant coach] Bryan Trottier talked to the team about darting in, darting out, switching positions, moving around, creating some havoc for the penalty killers and it seemed to be working," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said after the morning skate. "Right now, they're moving the puck well. They got a beautiful goal with Ennis' goal and last game, Ristolainen's goal was like that too."

Sabres captain Brian Gionta has seen improvements in Ristolainen's game and thinks that the space Ennis has helped create on the power play has been beneficial. Ennis' creativity on the point has been a welcome addition.

"It's gives you a different dynamic," Gionta said. "[Ennis] moves well up there, he's mobile and he's unpredictable – I think that's the biggest thing. He's not just stagnant back there."

Nolan has been impressed with Ennis' play all season. He leads the team in goals (18) and points (38).

"Somebody asked me, 'Who's the most consistent player on this team and the most valuable player on the team this year?'" Nolan said. "[It's] Tyler Ennis by far."

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### **COULD BE A LONG NIGHT**

Ten of the Sabres' past 18 games against the Devils have been decided in overtime or the shootout, including seven of the past 10.

Since the beginning of the 2007-08 season, Buffalo has participated in more shootouts against New Jersey than any other non-divisional opponent. Twelve of those 27 games have gone to the skills competition and Buffalo has a 7-5 record over that stretch.

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## **DEVELOPING SOME CONSISTENCY**

Buffalo has picked up points in three of its past four games. The team has seen a better overall effort as of late that they'd like to keep building on.

"Minus the one hiccup in Washington there, we've had one-goal games. We've been in every game, giving ourselves a chance," Gionta said. "Obviously we won one in the shootout, but we'd like to get one in regulation here and continue to improve. Our consistency's been much better."

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## **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

6 Mike Weber – 55 Rasmus Ristolainen  
51 Nikita Zadorov – 41 Andrej Meszaros  
61 Andre Benoit – 24 Tyson Strachan

35 Anders Lindback  
31 Matt Hackett

Scratched: 5 Chad Ruhwedel, 33 Chad Johnson (lower body injury), 47 Zach Bogosian (lower body injury)  
Injured Reserve: 4 Josh Gorges (lower body), 8 Cody McCormick (blood clots), 9 Evander Kane (shoulder), 28 Zemus Girgensons (lower body), 36 Patrick Kaleta (lower body)

## **Sabres unable to rally against Devils**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 20, 2015

The Buffalo Sabres are used to playing tight games against the New Jersey Devils and Friday's contest at First Niagara Center proved to be another close one.

New Jersey hung around and eventually took the lead in the second period. After that, they limited Buffalo's chances to come away with a 3-1 victory.

Matt Moulson tallied for Buffalo and Anders Lindback made 24 saves. Steve Bernier scored twice for New Jersey and Jordan Tootoo also put one home. Keith Kinkaide turned aside 28 shots.

"They try to lull you to sleep and they wait for those turnovers," Sabres forward Tyler Ennis said. "They capitalize on them and that's what they did. We turned one over and it ended up in the back of our net. They're a really good defensive team so they shut the door."

Buffalo had the lead for a brief moment 7:05 into the game when Johan Larsson crashed the net and put the puck in past Kinkaide. However, Larsson had his stick tied up and was forced to kick it in. Upon review, the goal was disallowed.

Sabres coach Ted Nolan saw that as a turning point in the game.

"You get a lead on New Jersey, it's a different game, but when you try to go from behind on them, they clog up the middle and it gets to be a pretty boring game," Nolan said. "But it's effective for them."

Larsson has put an emphasis on going to the front of the net and he's generated quite a few scoring chances the past few games. He had another opportunity in the slot later on in the second.

"I always try to get in front there," he said. "That's the area you score and you have to be there. [Matt Moulson] and Ennis are two dangerous guys who will get the puck there."

Not long after Larsson's second chance, the Devils took the lead and didn't look back. Bernier converted on a cross-ice one-timer with 9:08 into the second period to open the scoring. He scored again with 6:07 remaining in the period for what would end up being the deciding goal.

Tootoo made it 3-0 at the 8:14 mark of the third period, cutting in around the Sabres defense to capitalize.

The Sabres power play scored for the third-straight game. This time it was Matt Moulson tapping in a rebound on the goal line to snap Keith Kinkaid's shutout bid with 8:19 remaining in regulation.

The first unit, consisting of Moulson, Ennis, Larsson, captain Brian Gionta and Rasmus Ristolainen, have been responsible for all three of those goals. On Friday, a slap shot from the right wing by Gionta ended up on the left wing, where Ennis wound up for another big shot. His shot deflected out onto the goal line, where Moulson has been able to tap it in.

Ennis moved to the point three games ago and that switch has helped the special teams unit be more effective.

"I'm just trying to be as mobile as possible. On the power play, you need a lot of movement," Ennis said. "I'm trying to bring that creative side back there and it's working. I think our power play is really clicking."

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## **WAKE UP CALL UP**

After the morning skate, Buffalo made some roster moves, sending center Tim Schaller and defenseman Chad Ruhwedel back to the Rochester Americans of the American Hockey League and calling up center Mikhail Grigorenko.

Grigorenko has a goal and an assist in 14 NHL games so far this season. In Rochester this year, he has appeared in 40 games and has tallied 33 points (12+21).

Nolan said the reason for calling up Grigorenko was primarily to check in on him. Nolan wasn't sure how long Grigorenko would remain with the team but wants to see more from him.

"Just give him a look, see how he's progressing. Right now, guys are vying for jobs and we're seeing how they respond," Nolan said. "You look at Larsson, he's making a good name for himself and really taken advantage of it. Phil Varone's doing it. Grigorenko, his first game here, he has to learn to do that also."

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## **ON THE ROAD AGAIN**

The Sabres are back in action Saturday night with a game in Nashville. Faceoff against the Predators is scheduled for 8 p.m. EST with the Tops Game Night pregame show beginning at 7:30 p.m. EST on MSG-B and Bell. Nolan said that the team may turn to Matt Hackett in goal for that game.

They'll then head out to Dallas to wrap-up the two-game road trip with a date against the Stars on Monday at 8:30 p.m. EST.

## **Hackett stops 40 shots in loss to Predators**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 22, 2015

**NASHVILLE** – If there's one thing the Buffalo Sabres have been able to rely on lately – and actually for a good portion of the 2014-15 season – it's been their goaltending, no matter who's been between the pipes.

[Matt Hackett](#) held Buffalo in their game against the Nashville Predators on Saturday night at Bridgestone Arena, stopping 29 of 30 shots through two periods. The Predators ended up putting home two more in the third period to come away with a 3-0 victory.

Hackett, in his third start of the season and first appearance since March 7, ended up with 40 saves. It was a big bounce back game for Hackett, who gave up four goals on 23 shots in his last game against Washington.

"He gave us a chance," Sabres coach Ted Nolan said. "For a kid who's sat on the bench for the last couple weeks and patiently waiting – we had a chance to work with him the last couple days to prep him for this game. It wasn't an easy game to play. They have some good shooters on the other team so I thought he played real well."

Nashville's first goal came on the power play with 5:08 remaining in the second period. Matt Cullen won the draw to Hackett's right and Predators captain Shea Weber rifled a slap shot toward the net. Taylor Beck, standing in front, tipped in it to put Nashville up 1-0.

The Predators took a 2-0 lead 5:49 into the third with the Predators in transition. Colin Smith capitalized on an odd-man rush as [Nikita Zadorov](#) scrambled to get a new stick after he had broken his on a shot attempt, leading to the Nashville attack. Nolan wasn't pleased with the decision-making on that play.

Nashville's third goal came off a shot from the slot by Mike Fisher with 4:59 remaining in regulation.

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### **CHANCES IN THE THIRD**

Buffalo's offense struggled to generate much in the Nashville zone against goaltender Pekka Rinne, especially in the first 40 minutes. The Sabres were outshot 30-13 after two periods but did have a few prime opportunities in the third. Rinne ended up with 24 saves to earn the shutout.

"They're a very good team and for us to keep battling and fighting through and do what we did, especially in that third period, we had a number of scoring chances," Nolan said. "We hit the goal post twice I think and [Tyler Ennis](#) had a couple breakaways. You can't fault these guys for the effort, for sure."

[Mikhail Grigorenko](#) hit the goal post midway through the third and a few minutes later, Rinne sprawled out to rob Ennis, who was visibly frustrated by the result of the play.

"I beat him but I couldn't beat the post. Obviously I'm frustrated but at the same time, I'm kind of happy I had some chances," Grigorenko said. "The first period it wasn't really there but I still kept working and skating and hitting and after, it kind of paid off and chances started to come to me."

Ennis was later stopped on a breakaway with about 1:30 remaining and Rinne made a great glove save on [Cody Hodgson](#) with 50.9 seconds to go.

"This is a tough place to play. They came out with a lot of energy," Ennis said. "They took it to us, but when the game was still 1-0, 2-0, we had some chances to even it up."

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### **TOUGHING IT OUT**

Sabres forward Jerry D'Amigo left the game with 2:10 to play after he caught a high stick from Wilson in the mouth. D'Amigo went down on the play and some blood had to be cleaned up on the ice. He would later return to the game wearing a full cage on his helmet. He ended up playing 8:46 and recorded a shot on goal.

"He was banged up pretty good. That was a careless use of the stick there that got him pretty good, cut the inside of his mouth pretty good," Nolan said. "For him to come back, that's a gutsy thing to do, too."

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### **NEXT GAME**

The Sabres will play their third game in four nights on Monday in Dallas. Faceoff between the Sabres and Stars is set for 8:30 p.m. EST. The Tops Game Night pregame show will begin at 8 p.m. EST on MSG-B and Bell. The game can also be heard live on WGR 550.