



Buffalo Sabres

Daily Press Clips

March 3, 2015

Sabres ship away 4 veterans on NHL trade deadline day

By Jonah Bronstein

Associated Press

March 2, 2015

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The Buffalo Sabres continued their rebuilding effort Monday with a flurry of deadline day deals, moving four veterans set to become free agents when the season ends.

The last-place Sabres traded forwards Chris Stewart, Torrey Mitchell and Brian Flynn, and goalie Michal Neuvirth and received mostly draft picks as compensation.

"We are in 30th place. Our time is the future," Sabres general manager Tim Murray said. "And we added assets for the future."

Buffalo sent Mitchell and Flynn to Montreal in separate trades, receiving prospect forward Jack Nevins and a 2016 seventh-round draft pick for Mitchell and a 2016 fifth-round pick for Flynn.

Stewart was traded to Minnesota for a 2017 second-round pick.

Neuvirth was traded to the New York Islanders for goalie Chad Johnson and a 2016 third-round pick.

Buffalo has now traded two goalies this season after dealing Jhonas Enroth to Dallas last month.

Murray denied suggestions that the Sabres are tanking for the best possible draft position.

"We've got guys here who are going away at the end of the year," Murray said. "So you can let them finish the year here and walk away for nothing. Or you can add something. ... When you are at the bottom, you trade out guys who can help other teams for future assets."

The Sabres made their most significant move in advance of the deadline, acquiring left wing Evander Kane from Winnipeg in a seven-player deal on Feb. 11.

Buffalo received Kane, defenseman Zach Bogosian and college goaltender Jason Kasdorf in exchange for defenseman Tyler Myers, forwards Drew Stafford and Joel Armia, the rights to 2014 second-round pick Brendan Lemieux and Buffalo's latest of three 2015 first-round picks.

The Sabres are now down to two goalies with limited NHL experience in Johnson and Anders Lindback, who was acquired in the Enroth trade. Both rank outside the top 70 in save percentage this season.

Johnson, 28, has an 8-8-1 record, a 3.08 goals-against average and a .889 save percentage in 19 appearances this season. Johnson has played in 56 games for the Rangers, Coyotes and Bruins since being drafted by Pittsburgh in the fifth round in 2006. He has one year left on his contract after this season.

Lindback has played in 95 games over the past five seasons. He is 2-8-0 this season with a 3.71 goals-against average and an .875 save percentage.

Neuvirth has a 6-17-3 record, a 2.99 goals-against average and a .919 save percentage in 27 appearances this season. He has been on a roll since the Enroth trade, compiling a 3-4-2 record with a 2.28 goals-against average and .938 save percentage since the All-Star break.

Murray also provided an update on the condition of Rochester Americans defenseman Mark Pysyk, who collapsed during a pickup basketball game Saturday at the team's arena.

"He's got a few more tests to get done, but it doesn't seem, and thank God that it's not, serious," Murray said.

Sabres-Lightning preview

By Taylor Bechtold

Associated Press

March 2, 2015

While the Tampa Bay Lightning made minor moves as they compete for the Atlantic Division crown, the NHL-worst Buffalo Sabres continued their rebuild at the trade deadline.

It's uncertain who the visiting Sabres will start in net after Monday's deals, but new addition Braydon Coburn is expected to be available for a Tampa Bay team seeking its fourth straight win in the season series Tuesday night.

Having fallen further back of red-hot Montreal in the division race, the Lightning (38-20-6) sought to add some depth to the back end as they acquired Coburn from Philadelphia for fellow defenseman Radko Gudas and two draft picks.

Coburn has one goal and eight assists in 39 games this season, and the veteran blue liner will be reunited with former Flyers teammate Matt Carle.

"What I know of the team is they're really tough to play against," Coburn told the Lightning's official website. "They've got some really dynamic players, and they've got all the pieces for sure: Great goaltending, great defense and all the firepower."

Coburn joins a Tampa Bay defense that has shown some holes, allowing four goals or more for the second time in three games in Sunday's 4-3 loss at Florida. The Lightning had given up that many only twice over their previous 12.

Ben Bishop allowed five goals over a personal four-game win streak before the run was snapped Sunday. He's expected to get the nod versus Buffalo and has posted a 1.64 goals-against average in winning his last six meetings.

The Sabres' goalie situation isn't quite as clear after dealing Michal Neuvirth to the New York Islanders for netminder Chad Johnson and a 2016 third-round pick Monday. The Sabres (19-39-5) also shipped Jhonas Enroth to Dallas last month.

"I was enjoying my sushi and one of my teammates told me to look on the TV, so I looked and I saw (news of the trade)," Neuvirth said. "I was a little in shock."

Johnson is 8-8-1 with a 3.15 GAA in 17 starts this season. Anders Lindback, acquired in the Enroth trade, could make his Buffalo debut after going 0-7-0 with a 3.95 GAA in seven starts with the Stars.

The Sabres look to continue playing well offensively, scoring 13 times in the last three games after totaling seven over their previous six. They won two in a row for the first time since mid-December before Saturday's 5-3 loss at Florida.

Torrey Mitchell has three goals in his last two games, but he was dealt to Montreal for forward Jack Nevins and a draft pick. Buffalo also moved Brian Flynn to the Canadiens and fellow forward Chris Stewart to Minnesota for picks.

Andrej Meszaros has scored in each of his last two games and Cody Hodgson has two goals in his past three after registering two in his first 56. Tyler Ennis, who has a team-high 33 points, could return from a lower-body injury, but All-Star Zemgus Girgensons - second with 30 points - is out with a foot injury.

Tyler Johnson and Steven Stamkos have teamed for 12 goals in the past eight games for Tampa Bay, which averages a league-high 3.25. The tandem also has four goals and eight assists over the past five against the Sabres.

Following a 2-1 shootout loss in Buffalo on Dec. 2, the Lightning have won the last three meetings by a 12-2 margin.

Sabres' housecleaning continues

By John Vogl

Buffalo News

March 2, 2015

Regardless of your view on tanking, it's the path the Sabres chose years ago. They moseyed merrily down the lane Monday.

They hope it leads them toward the next road: respectability.

Buffalo General Manager Tim Murray entered the trade deadline hoping to move as many pending unrestricted free agents as possible. He didn't want to let the players walk away for nothing this summer, especially when Buffalo's goal is to maximize every asset it has to get out of the NHL basement.

Murray dealt three UFAs, sending Chris Stewart to Minnesota for a 2017 second-round draft pick; Michal Neuvirth to the New York Islanders for a 2016 third-rounder and backup goalie Chad Johnson; and Torrey Mitchell to Montreal for a 2016 seventh-round pick and low-level prospect Jack Nevins. The Sabres also sent Brian Flynn to the Canadiens for a 2016 fifth-round selection.

"We're in 30th place," Murray said. "Our time is the future, and we added assets for the future."

The present obviously took a hit, which is a plus when losing equals winning. The much-watched race for 30th place and a ticket to Connor McDavid or Jack Eichel has gotten close. Edmonton is only three points ahead of Buffalo in the standings while Arizona leads by four with 19 games remaining.

The Sabres helped their last-place cause by getting rid of their hottest player (Neuvirth), fourth-leading scorer (Stewart) and two forwards who kill penalties and have played on the top line (Flynn and Mitchell).

"Was it a good day? It's never a good day trading good people away," Murray said in First Niagara Center. "I talked to them all, and they all understood. ... When you are at the bottom or near the bottom, you trade out guys that can help other teams for future assets."

Over the next three years, the Sabres' future includes nine first- or second-round draft picks. They have two of each in June, one of each in 2016 and one first-rounder and two seconds in 2017.

As the Evander Kane trade showed, Murray can swap those picks for players. That's what the GM would prefer.

"Teams out there certainly know the young players that I like and would like to acquire," Murray said. "You just continue to work hard every day to try and do that and get it done. Do you get it done every time? You don't."

"We do have a lot of draft picks that can be used for something other than selecting players on draft day. That's why I believe they're valuable assets."

One of Murray's prime objectives will be to acquire a goaltender. With Johnson (.889) and Anders Lindback (.875), the Sabres have goalies whose save percentages rank 71st and 78th in the NHL.

"We have some good young goalies that aren't ready to step in next year and start," Murray said. "There are some potential free agents. I think there are a couple potential trades in the summertime."

"I've talked to a couple teams about young backup/maybe co-starters in this league this year that may come available in the summertime. It wasn't the right time or we couldn't come up with the right assets to make those deals today, but I know from my talks that we have a broad plan."

The future promise won't help the players who face Tampa Bay on Tuesday night. Buffalo's roster is in shambles.

Johnson, however, is hoping to make the best of the situation. The goalie is in the opening season of a two-year contract that pays \$2.6 million. The 28-year-old wants to make a good first impression to earn playing time next year.

"Their eyes are obviously set on one of those two picks there at the draft this year, but for myself I'm just going to go in there and try and win hockey games," Johnson said during an interview with Canada's TSN. "Regardless of where you are in the standings, you're there to play hard and win hockey games.

"There's an opportunity there. There's no starting goaltender there. For a guy like myself or any goalie, that's what you want to be. You want to be a starter."

Johnson earned his multiyear deal with a quality season in Boston. He went 17-4-3 with a .925 save percentage as Tuukka Rask's backup, but he went just 8-8-1 with the Isles this year. Although he has the chance to be a starter, he's leaving a Stanley Cup contender.

"It's going to be tough," he said on TSN, "but as a player you have to be optimistic about everywhere you go."

The Sabres have assigned the 21-year-old Nevins to Rochester. The forward has no goals and one assist in 35 minor-league games. The 6-foot-2, 199-pounder has 52 fights during four seasons of junior and professional hockey, according to HockeyFights.com.

"Is he an NHL player? I don't know the answer to that," Murray said. "He's a prospect. At the very least, he's going to help Rochester. He's a competitive, tough kid who plays the game properly."

Traded Sabres happy about destinations

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

March 2, 2015

TAMPA, Fla. – The four players General Manager Tim Murray traded off the Buffalo Sabres' roster Monday were all thrilled to land on likely playoff teams, taking a big jump from a club currently 30th in the NHL's overall standing.

Torrey Mitchell was ecstatic to be going home to Montreal and to rejoin Brian Flynn, who was stunned to be dealt to the Canadiens an hour before practice began. Michal Neuvirth and Chris Stewart were equally happy with their new destinations and also relieved that weeks of speculation about their fates were over.

They also had some interesting parting shots for the Sabres' clear goal of finishing last to produce the best odds in the NHL's draft lottery.

The red-hot Neuvirth, in particular, was annoyed by the notion he had to be traded away so the team could start losing. Since Jhonas Enroth was traded to Dallas, Neuvirth has been sensational in net. He started the last eight games, going 3-3-2 with a 2.19 goals-against average and glossy .942 save percentage as the Sabres crept closer to Edmonton and Arizona and threatened to escape the cellar. But in the bizarre world of NHL Tankology, circa 2015, Neuvirth had to go.

"I mean, that's crazy if you want to finish last to get a first draft pick," Neuvirth said. "It just doesn't seem right to me. You always want to win. And if you're playing for last place, I don't think it's right."

In Neuvirth and Enroth, of course, the Sabres have now traded away the two goalies who have earned all 43 of their points this season. With Stewart gone and Zemgus Girgensons out with a foot injury, the only forward in double figures in goals is Tyler Ennis with 15.

Stewart said he expects the players left behind will endure a difficult final month of the season.

"I do feel for them," Stewart said. "Just for the fact everybody keeps talking about the 'Tank Nation' and all that and tanking for McDavid. I know those guys in the dressing room. They gave it their all every night. It's something that they're not thinking about coming to the rink every day.

"It's frustrating hearing that every game. It's kind of insulting to the guys in the dressing room who go out there, block shots, get their faces punched in and play the right way."

After practice ended Monday afternoon around 12:30, most of the players retreated to a patio restaurant in the rear of their hotel, the Westin Harbour Island. They were watching TSN coverage of the trade proceedings on large televisions over the bar when Neuvirth's sushi lunch was interrupted by Stewart and Andrej Meszaros nudging him to look up at the screen and see he had just been dealt.

"I was a little in shock but it's a great opportunity to be in the playoffs and I'm excited," Neuvirth said. "They're a great team with really great players, skilled players. Jaro Halak is having an outstanding season. He's a great goalie. I think we're going to be a good tandem and hopefully we're gonna go deep in the playoffs."

Stewart's trade moment was equally bizarre. At the 3 p.m. deadline, no deal had been announced until Stewart's cell phone rang with a call from TSN. On live television, Stewart was told Minnesota was the destination.

"That was definitely a first," said a laughing Stewart. "I'm familiar with that division so it should be an easy transition. I'm excited to get back to the West. It should be a physical style which will play into the kind of player I am. I'm looking forward to it."

Flynn came to Amalie Arena expecting to practice and was quickly told he was heading to Montreal. That's pretty heady stuff for a former undrafted collegian out of the University of Maine who signed with Buffalo as a free agent in 2011.

"Everything about the Buffalo organization was first class. But at the same time, I'm really excited about this opportunity I have," Flynn said. "Go to a team that's in first-place in the East. you always have a chance to win. They're a good team. They play fast. They have good goaltending, good D, good group of forwards. I'm excited to do whatever they ask of me."

Mitchell, who grew up outside of Montreal, had an exploding phone of messages from friends and family about the news of his homecoming.

"I'll play more in my role, a third- or fourth-line role," Mitchell said. "As a depth guy still responsible for killing penalties and being responsible defensively."

Mitchell was walking into the arena with Flynn when the latter was traded. They had spent many games together on the same line this season.

"It was sort of an awkward situation," Mitchell said "I wished him luck and about three hours later he was sending me texts saying, 'Are we going to be linemates?' "

All the players were slated to leave Tampa on Monday night. Flynn and Mitchell were headed to meet the Canadians in Los Angeles, as the Habs will play the Anaheim Ducks on Wednesday and Los Angeles Kings on Thursday. Stewart should make his Wild debut in a home game Tuesday night against Ottawa while Neuvirth was heading to Dallas - and maybe a head-to-head with Enroth? - as the Islanders and Stars play Tuesday night.

Neuvirth is the only one who will see the Sabres again, as Buffalo plays the Islanders on April 4.

"I've said since day one I've been proud to be a Sabre. I wore it with pride," Stewart said. "It's been a first-class organization from the get-go, the way they treated me and my family. They welcomed me with open arms and it's something I'll never forget."

And Stewart had one final message for Buffalo-area reporters to convey to Sabres fans before he left.

"I know days are dark right now," he said. "It's not going to last forever. They definitely have got some pieces and are going in the right direction."

Ennis back with roster still to be determined

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

March 2, 2015

TAMPA, Fla. – Through all the craziness of NHL trade deadline day, it might be easy to forget there's a schedule to finish. The now-depleted Sabres have 19 games left, beginning Tuesday night against the Tampa Bay Lightning in a nationally televised affair at Amalie Arena.

You won't really know what kind of team the Sabres will have until they arrive at the rink for the morning skate.

Forwards Chris Stewart, Torrey Mitchell, Brian Flynn and goalie Michal Neuvirth are gone. Chad Johnson will come to fill Neuvirth's roster spot, and it's likely that Anders Lindback will make his debut in the Buffalo net against his former team.

With Ben Bishop injured, Lindback lost all three of his appearances last year in Tampa's first-round loss to Montreal. Lindback was just 2-8 with a 3.71 goals-against average and .875 save percentage this year in Rochester.

The Sabres will get Tyler Ennis back after the winger missed the last two games with a groin injury suffered last week in Columbus.

"The first shift I felt it and you want to make sure you don't tear it," Ennis said after practice here Monday. "You have to be careful. But I felt good today, ready to go."

The Sabres will need to call up two forwards from Rochester to join Ennis and fill in the spots of the departed players. They are already playing with a trio of recent Amerks up front in Johan Larsson, Phil Varone and Zac Dalpe. They will have some company.

Mikhail Grigorenko, who is just back from a knee injury, and Tim Schaller are candidates to get another look at the NHL level. General Manager Tim Murray might want to get a look at two of his trade acquisitions in wingers Jerry D'Amigo or William Carrier. Or maybe this will be the time for Dan Catenacci's NHL debut.

D'Amigo was acquired this year from Columbus for Luke Adam while Carrier was acquired last season from St. Louis in the Ryan Miller/Steve Ott trade. D'Amigo has six goals and 13 assists in 31 games since joining the Amerks while Carrier has seven goals and 11 assists in 55 games. Catenacci, Buffalo's third-round pick in 2011, has 10 goals and nine assists in 53 games.

The Lightning are coming off Sunday's 4-3 loss in Florida. They are the NHL's highest-scoring team and are third in home points with a 23-6-1 record here.

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Coach Ted Nolan put the players through about a 50-minute workout Monday but it was far from crisp. The swirling speculation around the team made it tough on concentration levels and the trade of Flynn surprised the team just as players were arriving at the rink.

Stewart and a few other players left the ice immediately after the final drills without staying for any extra work.

"You could just tell there was a little bit of a fog over practice," Nolan said. "They were doing their jobs but you can tell they weren't concentrating as well as they normally have. We'll throw that one out as conditioning. We'll get our feet back underneath us ... wait for the dust to settle and see what we have."

The Sabres did not make Nolan available for comment later in the day after the trades were completed. A team spokesman said Nolan would have his normal pregame briefing after Tuesday's morning skate.

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Defenseman Mark Pysyk has not returned to practice after collapsing Saturday during a pickup basketball game with Rochester Amerks teammates, and doctors are still not quite sure what caused the medical emergency that led to him leaving Blue Cross Arena by ambulance and spending several hours in the hospital.

Pysyk's parents flew in from Edmonton to be with the 23-year-old during his recovery. Murray said doctors did multiple tests to rule out a tumor and those came back negative.

"He's got a few more tests to get done," Murray said. "It doesn't seem, thank God, that it's serious but who knows what serious is? You take a seizure that serious. We just want him to have the best care, take his time, feel comfortable when he wants to come back. Certainly we're going to do everything we can to rule out everything that we can."

Pysyk played 18 minutes for the Sabres in Thursday night's win over Vancouver and a regular shift in Friday's overtime loss for Rochester against Toronto.

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Murray said all of his focus Monday was on deadline day moves and he has not pondered the looming dilemma over Rochester goalie Matt Hackett.

Hackett, acquired from Minnesota two years ago in the Jason Pominville trade, can become an unrestricted free agent July 1 if he does not play in eight NHL games and play at least 30 minutes a game. He will be a restricted free agent if he does. Hackett, who suffered a major knee injury last April that required surgery, has played one game for the Sabres thus far, on Jan. 30 in Vancouver.

So the team needs to play him in seven of the final 19 NHL games to control his rights.

"I can call Matt up but I'm not going to tell the coaches to play him," Murray said. "That's in their hands. That has not been something I've been thinking about today."

One player won't solve Sabres' woes

By Bucky Gleason

Buffalo News

March 2, 2015

Last week, before the Sabres left for their road trip to Florida, Tim Murray pulled Brian Gionta aside in the dressing room for an impromptu meeting. He assumed his captain understood the situation, but he wanted to make sure with the NHL trade deadline fast approaching.

The Sabres were in dead last in the NHL, perfect for the pro-tanking crowd that has become obsessed with Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel. Murray had pending free agents that needed to be traded. He braced Gionta for the worst in a season that already has been miserable.

"He's the coach of our team in the room when it's just the players in there," Murray said Monday. "I like to keep him updated. Without telling him our plan, he knows what the expectations are. He knows this day was coming. And he's a professional. When you're in 30th place, every player had to figure you're moving players out."

It was hard to fathom the Sabres getting any worse this season, but Murray managed to weaken his roster Monday. He had little choice but to trade Chris Stewart, Torrey Mitchell, Brian Flynn and Michal Neuvirth while he could. The unspoken benefit was getting worse in the process.

Murray has denied all along, and he did again Monday, that he's been told or decided himself that the Sabres needed to finish last and place themselves in the best possible position to select Connor McDavid or Jack Eichel in the NHL draft. The only way to ensure getting one of them is by finishing 30th.

So let's not kid ourselves.

Murray is known as a masterful talent evaluator. He was either putting his team in position for McEichel or over his head as a general manager. Goaltender Chad Johnson was the only addition who will play in the NHL this season, assuming Ted Nolan is desperate enough to put him in the crease.

By the looks of things, the Sabres sank to a new low Monday. They weren't alone. The Coyotes were intent on dropping to the bottom with them after gutting their roster and positioning themselves for one of the two young stars. It has turned into an arms race in reverse, an embarrassment for the NHL.

Sadly, pathetically, times have changed.

This is no indictment of McDavid or Eichel, both of whom are blessed with talent and appear to be future superstars. People see them and think Sidney Crosby while forgetting that the Penguins had Evgeni Malkin, Jordan Staal, Marc-André Fleury, Kris Letang, Brooks Orpik and other key players on their roster.

Pittsburgh has had entertaining teams for years, but it won one Stanley Cup despite all the talent surrounding Crosby. Wayne Gretzky led the Oilers through their glory days, but they were good enough to win a Cup without him. Edmonton has stocked up on high picks in recent years and gone nowhere.

Alex Ovechkin never won a Cup. Neither did Ilya Kovalchuk. Or Gilbert Perreault. Or Pat LaFontaine. Or Cam Neely and a long list of others. Why? Because winning requires more than one player. The best forwards play about 20 minutes a night, which means they're on the bench for about 40 minutes.

But that doesn't stop people from pinning their hopes to an 18-year-old who has never played against men who don't care about their potential.

Obviously, McDavid or Eichel would help any team, but throwing away an entire season for any individual makes little sense in a team game.

The two games in the coming weeks between the Sabres and Coyotes should be interesting. Will they cycle the puck in their own end? Do they shoot on their own goaltender? If the idea is losing, why bother with a goaltender at all? They could play three-on-three and expose the game for the joke it will be.

It's ludicrous.

This is what happens in professional sports that encourage losing as a strategy for winning. It goes against everything sports are about and compromises their integrity. I don't know a competitor worth keeping who would embrace losing.

If the NHL wanted to stop tanking, and it should, it would give the first pick overall (or the best odds of winning the lottery) to the team finishing 17th in the league and continue down the line. Problem solved.

Brainwashed Sabres fans have been on board with losing all season. The standards have been lowered. The whole thing is backward because they have embraced the backward thinking of people making decisions. Years ago, fans protested outside the arena because they fired Nolan. Now, they pay to see him lose.

You know who doesn't agree with the pro-tanking sect? Tim Murray. At least that's what he said Monday after making his roster worse than it was the previous day. He broke things down after his news conference, just as he did with Gionta. They had free agents who needed to be traded.

Tanking?

"I don't want to have anything to do with it," Murray said. "I don't even want to speak to it. I've got great confidence that if we're picking 28th, we're going to get a hell of a player. If we're picking 25th, we might get a hell of a player. If we don't get one of those two guys, we'll find a way to get a top center iceman."

Murray wants to believe it could turn around quickly, but he has yet to earn the benefit of the doubt. He has never rebuilt a team. He's still cleaning up the mess left behind by the previous regime. Nine first- and second-round picks over the next three years should help, but nothing is certain.

I'm still not sure what to make of the guy. He paid a hefty price for Evander Kane and Zack Bogosian, guys he considers impact players. Rookie defensemen Rasmus Ristolainen and Nikita Zadorov appear to be solid young players. He believes Sam Reinhart will be a top-six forward. We'll see.

The next 18 months are critical. Kane has two full seasons before he's an unrestricted free agent. The Sabres better be selling Kane more than a big paycheck and pretty practice rink. He's getting paid whether he stays or leaves, but there are better places to live than Buffalo and better teams than the Buffalo Sabres.

Murray's best sales pitch for free agents will be winning. Buffalo has been in such bad shape that management was forced to overpay players to stick around. When that happens, you get players performing below value and staying for the wrong reasons. Before long, you're back where you started. And it's not pretty.

"I believe, as bad as it looks, that we're on our way to assembling a talented base that can be competitive for a long time," Murray said. "That's all I'm trying to do."

Roth: Sabres respond in NHL's race for last

By Leo Roth

Rochester Democrat & Chronicle

March 2, 2015

Monday is Deadline Day in the NHL and NFL.

NHL teams have until 3 p.m. to make trades and NFL teams have until 4 p.m. to tag players with franchise or transition tags, if they desire to keep them off the impending free agent market.

If you thought the Sabres could rest after GM Tim Murray's blockbuster nine-player trading day on Feb. 11, think again. In the race to finish in 30th place and greatly improve one's lottery chances of snaring one of the top two picks in the draft (Connor McDavid, Jack Eichel), Arizona Coyotes GM Don Maloney has laid the gauntlet down.

The Coyotes, losers of a nine in a row and now just four points out of the NHL's basement that is rightfully Buffalo's, traded their top scorer, defenseman Keith Yandle, to the New York Rangers on Sunday after dealing Antoine Vermette, their second-leader scorer, to Chicago last week. Monday, it was top penalty killer Zbynek Michalek that was shipped to St. Louis.

With the puck in his court, Murray had to respond.

Early on Monday, he dealt center and former Rochester Amerk Brian Flynn to Montreal for a fifth-round pick in 2016. Waiting by their phones as the deadline approached were Chris Stewart, Torrey Mitchell, Andrej Meszaros and goalie Michal Neuvirth.

Neuvirth is the reason things have become stressful in the race for last. Since taking over No. 1 duties for Jhonas Enroth (Dallas), he's 3-4-2 with a 2.33 goals against average and sparkling .937 save percentage in nine starts. That's eight needless points in the standings. That's it. He's got to go.

It's difficult to watch a player like Flynn depart, but that's the business and the predicament the Sabres find themselves. He was one of those feel-good stories that come along, a native of Lynnfield, Massachusetts, who tore things up at the University of Maine before signing a free-agent deal in 2012 with Buffalo. After 45 games of seasoning in Rochester, he became a full-time NHLer who had picked up his scoring touch of late.

Hard working, good in shootouts, solid on the penalty kill, a media favorite, one of coach Ted Nolan's favorites ... of course Flynn appealed to the Canadiens. Flynn goes from worst to first with the move. After telling reporters how grateful he is to the Sabres/Amerks organization, he expressed excitement over the opportunity to compete for a Stanley Cup.

"It's a weird path but I'm excited where I'm landing," he said. "All of my buddies are Bruins fans but I think they'll understand."

As for the Bills, don't look for them to do anything on the franchise/transition tag front.

There are two free-agents-to-be that GM Doug Whaley can consider — running back C.J. Spiller and linebacker/end Jerry Hughes. But neither player is worth the kind of money a franchise tag requires (top five pay at their positions).

Hughes is a player Buffalo has to work hard to retain with a new deal before free agency begins next Tuesday — he's a versatile pass rusher, a rare commodity. Spiller is a nice player, but his skill set is a difficult one to utilize consistently to justify a giant contract. New coach Rex Ryan likes durable, downfield runners, and that's not Spiller.

Other keepers: Linebacker Brandon Spikes and safety Da'Norris Searcy.

Sabres get Ennis back in lineup against Lightning

By David Satriano

NHL.com

March 2, 2015

SABRES (19-39-5) at LIGHTNING (38-20-6)

TV: NBCSN

Season series: The Tampa Bay Lightning have outscored the Buffalo Sabres in regulation 13-3 in four games this season. Lightning goalie Ben Bishop is 2-0-0 with a .971 save percentage and a shutout. Forward Ondrej Palat has two goals and three assists and Tyler Johnson has five assists. Tyler Ennis, Zemgus Girgensons, Cody McCormick scored for the Sabres.

Sabres team scope: Forward Tyler Ennis, who missed the past two games with a groin injury, will be in the lineup. Buffalo was active at the NHL Trade Deadline on Monday, trading forwards Chris Stewart and Bryan Flynn and goalie Michal Neuvirth. Buffalo received goalie Chad Johnson, who is 8-8-1 with a 3.08 goals against average and an .889 save percentage, and forward prospect Jack Nevins. "[Nevins] is a competitive tough kid who plays the game properly. ... He is a pro and he is a hungry kid." general manager Tim Murray told the Sabres website. Johnson could be in goal for the Sabres, who may recall a forward from Rochester of the American Hockey League. "Johnson had a good season with Boston (in 2013-14). ... He hasn't had a good year on Long Island, but he is a guy that most teams think is a legit backup," Murray said.

Lightning team scope: Tampa Bay traded forward Brett Connolly and defenseman Radko Gudas in separate deals on Monday and acquired defenseman Braydon Coburn from the Philadelphia Flyers. "What I know of the team is they're really tough to play against," Coburn told the Lightning website. "They've got some really dynamic players, and they've got all the pieces for sure. Great goaltending, great defense and all the firepower up front too." The Lightning begin a three-game homestand and look to continue their dominance at home, where they are 23-6-1. They are 11-3-2 against Atlantic Division opponents this season. Forward Steven Stamkos has seven goals in eight games.

Wild, Sabres finally agree on Stewart trade

By Dan Myers

NHL.com

March 2, 2015

ST. PAUL, Minn. -- Before speaking to media members Monday evening, Minnesota Wild general manager Chuck Fletcher needed to charge his phone. The battery was nearly dead after another busy NHL Trade Deadline, something that has become a staple during the Fletcher regime.

After acquiring defenseman Jordan Leopold from the Columbus Blue Jackets earlier in the day, little else was expected from the Wild as 2 p.m. local time approached.

But shortly before the deadline (three minutes to be exact), Fletcher and Buffalo Sabres general manager Tim Murray were able to agree to a trade that sent forward Chris Stewart to Minnesota for a second-round pick in the 2017 NHL Draft.

Fletcher and Murray, who are close friends, made their third straight deadline-day deal, following trades that sent Jason Pominville (2013) and Matt Moulson (2014) to the Wild from the rebuilding Sabres.

And for the third straight year, the Wild traded a future second-round pick to the Sabres, who received two second-round picks from Minnesota in 2014 and have another in 2016.

Fletcher said he and Murray had several conversations over the past year about Stewart and the Wild's potential interest in the power forward. Each time, the price Murray wanted wasn't one the Wild were willing to pay.

"I'd let him know that he was a player we would potentially have interest in," Fletcher said. "The price never seemed to fit in terms of what we spoke about."

But as Monday wore on and the deadline approached, Fletcher said the price on Stewart became more palatable. At 1:57 p.m. local time, an agreement was reached and an email was submitted to the NHL.

"Tim had a lot of scenarios and I guess they didn't pan out for him," Fletcher said. "I just let him know that if things didn't work out, he probably had my number on his cell phone and he could give me a call. I wish he would have given me more than a few minutes, but we were able to work it out."

One of the most talked about names as the deadline neared, Stewart knew he was in play. He was delighted when he heard where he was headed.

"As soon as I heard it was them I was really excited," Stewart said. "They've got a really good hockey team and they've been playing really great hockey lately."

"Minnesota has always been one of my favorite places to play. The fans there have been great, and coming to that arena, they're always fired up and ready to support that team. Being on the other end of it now, I'm sure it'll feel a little bit different, but exciting."

Minnesota has been the NHL's hottest team since the All-Star break (13-2-1), but with injuries to forwards Matt Cooke, Ryan Carter and Jason Zucker, Fletcher said trading for Stewart was an opportunity to add insurance.

"Our depth has certainly been tested in various areas up front and on defense," Fletcher said. "This is the last opportunity to improve your depth for this season. I'd rather have a lot of options than not enough."

Minnesota has several games against the Nashville Predators and St. Louis Blues, and the Los Angeles Kings, Winnipeg Jets and Anaheim Ducks, teams that are bigger and have posed matchup problems for the Wild in the past. They're also potential opponents in the Stanley Cup Playoffs, should the Wild qualify.

"Probably the one fair criticism you can level at us is our lack of size," Fletcher said. "Chris is a big, strong guy (6-foot-2, 231 pounds), certainly a guy who brings a lot of toughness to our team. But he's a player who has contributed offensively, can play on the power play, and is willing to go to the net. With the type of players we have on our team, he complements them really well."

Stewart said Fletcher told him not to "reinvent the wheel." He laid out a simple game-plan for Stewart to follow and a way he hopes to see him play over the rest of this season.

"It's going to be a great challenge. I look forward to it," Stewart said. "It's a fresh start and it couldn't have come at a better time. Adding my size and my physicality to that lineup, I think that's something they're looking for."

Sabres trade Chris Stewart to Wild

By Katie Strang

ESPN.com

March 2, 2015

The Buffalo Sabres traded Chris Stewart to the Minnesota Wild at the last moment prior to Monday's 3 p.m. ET NHL trade deadline, ending weeks of speculation about where the forward might land.

The Wild sent a second-round pick in the 2017 draft to Buffalo, which will retain half of Stewart's salary, a source confirmed to ESPN.com.

The Stewart deal came shortly after Minnesota acquired defenseman Jordan Leopold from the Columbus Blue Jackets for Justin Falk and a fifth-round pick.

Stewart, 27, has 11 goals and 25 points in 61 games for the Sabres this season. He found out about the deal when reached by phone Monday afternoon by TSN.

"It's kind of been an emotional roller coaster," Stewart said on the network's live trade deadline show. "It's hard not to get caught up in the distractions."

The 34-year-old Leopold, a Golden Valley, Minnesota, native, appeared in 25 games for the Blue Jackets this season and provides the Wild with some depth at the position.

The Wild got a leg up on the trade market earlier this season, acquiring goaltender Devan Dubnyk in a move that has been heralded as a season saver. General manager Chuck Fletcher also added depth forward Sean Bergenheim last week.

Sabres trade assets at deadline, weaken NHL's worst roster

By Bill Hoppe
Olean Times Herald
March 2, 2015

BUFFALO – The Sabres' deals before Monday's trade deadline stripped the NHL's worst team of four assets. Gone are starting goalie Michal Neuvirth, first-line winger Chris Stewart and centers Brian Flynn and Torrey Mitchell, two checkers thrust into bigger roles thanks to the rebuilding team's shortage of talent.

In return, the Sabres received, well, nothing very notable or of immediate help. Only one NHL player, backup goalie Chad Johnson, came back. They also added four draft picks – a second, third, fifth and seventh – and an AHL fighter.

Of course, Monday strengthened the Sabres' hold on 30th place. The moves were possibly enough to secure a last-place finish, meaning they will be able to draft either Connor McDavid or Jack Eichel, two 17-year-old superstars.

The talk about the Sabres tanking this season – something general manager Tim Murray flatly denied is doing – will only increase now.

"I've never been told to finish last," Murray said inside the First Niagara Center.

Murray believes the Sabres acquired "future assets."

"That's how we made the team better," he said.

But how bad is the current roster? The healthy players left have combined for 61 goals the *entire season*. The goalies – the Sabres have had *nine* since Murray took over less than 14 months ago – have 10 combined wins. Both Johnson and Anders Lindback have wretched save percentages below .890.

Of the four players traded, only Flynn, who's a restricted free agent, won't be unrestricted following the season.

"Was it a good day?" Murray asked. "It's never a good day to give good people away. I talked to them all. They all understand and are somewhat happy with their situations."

Dishing players with expiring contracts, Murray said, is standard procedure.

"We're in 30th place," he said. "We've got guys here who are going away at the end of the year. So you can let them finish the year here and walk away for nothing. Or you can add something. And that's been the history of sports. ... When you are at the bottom, you trade out guys who can help other teams for future assets."

The trades:

– Shortly before the deadline, Stewart, their biggest chip, went to the Minnesota Wild for a 2017 second-round pick. The Sabres are keeping half of his salary, according to reports.

– Neuvirth went to the New York Islanders for Johnson and a 2016 third-round pick. Neuvirth has been strong all season, especially since he became the No. 1 last month, posting a .942 save percentage in eight starts.

– Mitchell went to the Montreal Canadiens for a 2016 seventh-round pick and 21-year-old forward Jack Nevins, an AHL tough guy. The Sabres are keeping half of Mitchell's salary, according to a French-Canadian report. Mitchell is from Montreal.

– In the morning, Flynn went to the Canadiens for a 2016 fifth-round pick.

Nineteen games are left this season. The Sabres have won only 19 times all season. They were on pace to be the lowest-scoring team in the modern era *before* the trades.

What's going to happen during the final six weeks?

"I assume the players that we have here will try to win every game," Murray said. "I assume the coaching staff will try to win every game. They've never had any interference from me, from Day One. The players have never been told by me to not win. There's never been any talk about that. The only talk I get about that is from the press. We just don't talk about that."

If the Sabres didn't care about winning, Murray said, why did they keep starting Neuvirth when Lindback, perhaps the league's worst goalie, was available?

"If everybody in here ... thinks that Neuvirth is a much better goalie than Lindback, then we were trying to lose every game, we probably should've been trying to play Lindback," he said. "But that's not what we're doing."

Trading Neuvirth could bite the Sabres. While they have some good goalie prospects, none of them are NHL-ready. It's unlikely Johnson, a decent backup with a year left on his contract, or Lindback will become their goalie of the future. Murray said he doesn't know if he's comfortable with either.

But Murray believes he had to trade the 26-year-old Neuvirth to get some sort of return.

"I wish ... free agency was 31 years old again," Murray said. "Unfortunately, it's not. He's played great since he became the starter here. Did that make people or teams hotter to get him or did that put him on the radar? I don't know that."

Murray plans to keep looking for that goalie.

"There are some potential free agents," he said. "I think there are a couple potential trades in the summertime. I talked to a couple teams about young backups (or) co-starters in this league this year that may become available in the summertime. It wasn't the right time or we couldn't come up with the right assets to make those deals today. But I know from my talks we have a broad plan."

Sabres notes: Brian Flynn excited for opportunity with Canadiens; Market for Torrey Mitchell was small

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 2, 2015

BUFFALO – Less than three years ago, Brian Flynn was an undrafted and mostly unknown youngster at the University of Maine. The versatile forward's signing with the Sabres barely registered with the fan base.

But Flynn quickly and quietly worked himself into a strong NHL prospect.

After less than a season in Rochester, Flynn debuted with the Sabres in 2012-13. The 26-year-old played regularly until they dealt him to the Montreal Canadiens on Monday for a fifth-round pick in 2016 hours before the NHL trade deadline.

"I don't think it's all sunk in quite yet," Flynn told reporters in Tampa Bay, where the Sabres play the Lightning tonight. "I still haven't even talked to any of the guys in the locker room."

Flynn is leaving the NHL's worst team for the Eastern Conference's best.

"It was a weird path, but I'm excited where I'm at right now," Flynn said.

Flynn, a restricted free agent after the season, said he "knew it was a possibility."

"I think (general manager) Tim Murray's pretty clear that anyone restricted or unrestricted this year was up for grabs," he said. "It was surprising still when you get the call. I'm really grateful for the opportunity I was given here."

The Boston native has five goals and 17 points in 54 games this season and 17 goals and 41 points in 159 NHL appearances.

Murray said Montreal wanted depth for its playoff run.

"I had talked to a couple teams about him," Murray said. "I wasn't ... going into today trying to trade Brian. His name came up in a couple trade talks with two teams. It so happened Montreal was the last team, and the offer was enough for us to do the deal."

Flynn, a strong checker who can play center and wing, skated 15 minutes, 53 seconds a game with the rebuilding Sabres this season. On the contender like the Canadiens, Flynn will likely have a third- or fourth-line role and kill penalties. He often skated among the top nine forwards with Buffalo.

"I'm excited, just do whatever they ask me there," he said.

He added: "Obviously, I don't expect to go there and play the 20 minutes a night I've been playing here. They've got a really deep lineup, lot of good forwards."

Flynn played more than 20 minutes in the last two games and scored in Thursday's 6-3 win against Vancouver.

"I think recently I've been playing well," he said.

What will people back home think about a Boston native joining the Bruins' most heated rival?

"All my buddies are Bruins fans, but I think they'll understand," he said.

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The Sabres received a low return – a 2016 seventh-round pick and Jack Nevins, a 21-year-old AHL tough guy – for Torrey Mitchell, their No. 2 center.

“That was the market, and we got a young guy in Jack Nevins that when I was in Ottawa we tried to sign, free agent out of Quebec Junior League,” Murray said. “Is he an NHL player? I don’t know the answer to that. He’s a prospect. At the very least he is going to help Rochester.

“He’s a competitive, tough kid who plays the game properly. His approach to playing the game is he does it the right way. He’s a pro. And he’s a hungry kid. And at the end of the day that was the best offer I had in that deal.”

The 6-foot-2, 199-pound Nevins has zero points and 88 penalty minutes in 32 games with the Hamilton Bulldogs this season. The Sabres have assigned him to the AHL.

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Goalie Chad Johnson, acquired from the New York Islanders in the Michal Neuvirth deal, and newcomer Anders Lindback, who hasn’t played with the Sabres yet, are now the team’s netminders. Statistically, they are two of the NHL’s worst.

Johnson is 8-8-1 with a 3.08 goals-against average and a .889 save percentage in 19 games. The 28-year-old has one year and \$1.6 million left on his contract.

Lindback’s numbers with Dallas – 2-8, 3.71 and .875 – were terrible.

Johnson, a career backup, has also played for the New York Rangers, Arizona and Boston. He played a career-high 27 games with the Bruins last season, posting the best numbers – 17-4-3, 2.10 and .925 – of his five-year career.

“Johnson had a good season with Boston – he had good numbers, good analytics numbers,” Murray said. “He hasn’t had a good year on Long Island. But he’s a guy I think most teams, certainly the teams he’s been with, think is a legit backup. He’s not old. I don’t know if he has the ability to be a starter. I guess depending on how (coach) Teddy (Nolan) wants to divvy up the games between now and the end of the year we’ll find out.”

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Chris Stewart, dished late in the day, found out during a live television interview the Sabres had traded him to the Minnesota Wild.

“My phone rang and it was James Duthie,” the winger said, “and then I was on live with TSN and they told me I was traded to the Minnesota Wild. As soon as I heard it was them I was really excited.”

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The Sabres need to make two recalls, Murray said. Winger Tyler Ennis will play tonight after missing two games (lower body).

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Murray had no new update on Sabres prospect Mark Pysyk, who was briefly hospitalized Saturday after collapsing during a pickup basketball game in Rochester.

"Thank God ... it's not serious," he said. "But who knows what serious is?"

Murray said test results have come back in Pysyk's favor and more will be done.

"We just want him to have the best care, take his time, feel comfortable when he wants to come back," Pysyk said. "But certainly we're going to do everything we can to rule out everything we can and go from there."

With 19 games remaining, Murray's done his part

By Matt Spielman

Jamestown Post Journal

March 2, 2015

The first part of Tim Murray's job as Buffalo's general manager is complete.

Murray managed to tear down the Sabres' roster enough to put the organization in the driver's seat to secure one of the top two picks in the 2015 National Hockey League entry draft, said to be one of the strongest in years.

By finishing last, the Sabres will be assured a 20 percent chance of landing the No. 1 pick — likely Erie Otters sensation Connor McDavid — and a 100 percent certainty of landing one of the top two picks — the second of which will likely be Boston University freshman Jack Eichel.

One might think it would be easy to make sure you are the worst team in a specific league, but Arizona and Edmonton have been making life difficult for the Sabres.

Don Maloney, Coyotes general manager, has seemingly made it his organizational goal to "tank" harder than the Sabres these past few weeks as his team has lost 11 of its last 12 games, moving within three points of Buffalo for the 30th position.

Edmonton, despite high draft picks for years that have almost dispelled the theory that losing pays off, can't figure out how to win either and is just one point better than Arizona with 19 games to play.

Being around Buffalo, it seems that Murray has been at the "tanking" game longer than other teams and that the Sabres deserve to be rewarded with McDavid due to the fan base's long-term investment in losing, but that's not how sports works.

And to call tanking unethical is just wrong in my opinion.

An organization has to be fully committed to tanking and know how it is going to affect several different angles before going forward.

Coaches are never going to coach to lose and players are never going to play to lose, but they can still buy in to the plan of not being as successful in the short term in order to achieve longer-term glory.

Matt Moulson is a good example of this with the Sabres. The former 30-goal scorer came to Buffalo last year as part of a trade for Thomas Vanek after four complete seasons and 11 games with New York. Moulson experienced what the Sabres were going through for 44 games before being shipped off to Minnesota at the trade deadline. But Moulson, who shined for years playing on the Islanders with John Tavares, knows how important playing with a game-changing centerman can be. I'm sure the chance to possibly play with Sam Reinhart — who is already in the Sabres' system — McDavid or Eichel was part of the conversation with Murray when Moulson decided to return to Buffalo this past offseason on a five-year deal.

The organization also needs to believe that playing for a high draft pick for a year or two will not make it unattractive for other free agents in the NHL to think about signing with the Sabres in the future. To think that other players around the league don't know what is going on in Buffalo is naive, and to think that they aren't smart enough to know that signing with the Sabres is still a good move in a few years when Reinhart, Zemgus Girgensons, Rasmus Ristolainen, Nikita Zadorov and whoever they draft at the top of the draft this summer are hitting their primes doesn't give pro hockey players enough credit.

Finally, the organization must know that the fan base can put up with it. Following social media, it appears that a large majority of Sabres fans are on board with the process. Tim Murray isn't much different than Darcy Regier when it comes to the process. At the start of last season, Regier mentioned how there would be suffering that

goes along with the Sabres rebuilt. While he may not have used the best terminology and may have left a sour taste in the mouths of many fans when he said that, Regier's "suffering" isn't much different than Murray's "losing the right way."

The National Football League and Major League Baseball have used the same entry draft system for years with the worst team getting the top pick and the best team getting the last pick. Nobody had a problem with the Indianapolis Colts tanking when they didn't look for a better quarterback option after Peyton Manning got injured. The Colts knew Andrew Luck was the prize for finishing last and that was fine with the organization. It was probably fine with their fans too.

Nobody was overly critical of the Tampa Bay Rays for finishing last in both the 2007 and 2008 seasons, one of which gave them David Price. The Washington Nationals weren't chastised for finishing last in 2009 and 2010, giving them Stephen Strasburg and Bryce Harper. And I haven't heard anybody complain about the Houston Astros being the worst team in baseball the last three years either.

Being the worst team is risky business. If an organization is willing to take that risk with the goal of drafting a generational player, that is their own business.

Sports are meant to be entertaining. Fans in Buffalo have never really cared how Arizona or Edmonton did the night before. The Ontario Hockey League and Hockey East have never been on fans' radars until this year.

And there are no guarantees in the draft. But if the last 10 years in most sports are any indication, drafting No. 1 gives you the best chance of acquiring a player for the ages.

Trades show that Sabres are tanking

By David Hibbard
Batavia Daily News
March 2, 2015

Chris Stewart had to wait almost literally until the last second to be freed from a situation that has been a running joke across the National Hockey League.

Three minutes before the league's trade deadline of 3 p.m. Eastern time, the Buffalo Sabres dealt the veteran right winger to the Minnesota Wild in a move that allowed general manager Tim Murray to save a little bit of face.

Stewart was the subject of trade rumors for months. He started the season poorly, with just five goals and five assists in his first 39 games. But Stewart turned his game up a few notches over the last couple of months, collecting six goals and nine assists in his last 22 contests in Buffalo.

After having seen several forwards — including Jiri Tlustý, Daniel Winnik, Jaromir Jagr, David Clarkson and Antoine Vermette — dealt during the week leading up to the trade deadline, Murray probably figured teams would be flooding him with offers of first- or second-round draft picks to acquire Stewart.

But watching NHL Network's coverage of trade deadline day Monday, there wasn't much movement on the Stewart front. Many other trades went down. Meanwhile, Stewart remained a Sabre.

Finally, Murray found a trading partner in Minnesota GM Chuck Fletcher.

And Murray got what he wanted. Sort of.

Buffalo acquired the Wild's second-round pick ... in 2017.

According to media reports, Murray was asking for a lot. But other teams knew what a streaky and up-and-down player Stewart is and refused to take the bait. So Murray got what he could for a player who is an unrestricted free agent.

I guess Murray should be commended for getting something in return for a player who he may have lost at the end of the season anyway. But really, he overvalued Stewart, who doesn't always play like the power forward he has the potential to be.

"We've got guys here who are going away at the end of the year," Murray said. "So you can let them finish the year here and walk away for nothing. Or you can add something."

Murray began the day by trading depth forward Brian Flynn to the Montreal Canadiens for a fifth-round pick in 2016, then sent center Torrey Mitchell to the Habs later in the day for forward prospect Jack Nevins and a seventh-rounder in 2016.

Between those deals, Murray traded goaltender Michal Neuvirth — who has been brilliant of late — to the New York Islanders for goalie Chad Johnson and a 2016 third-rounder.

Johnson went just 8-8-1 with the Islanders this season, but had a great year in 2013-14, going 17-4-3 with two shutouts while backing up Tuukka Rask in Boston.

Now the Sabres' goalies will be Johnson and Anders Lindback, who has played just 95 NHL games as a backup in Nashville, Tampa Bay and Dallas. Lindback has yet to play in Buffalo since the Sabres acquired him from the Stars Feb. 11 for Jhonas Enroth.

"When you are at the bottom, you trade out guys who can help other teams for future assets," Murray said.

And thanks to the four deals — three of them involving UFAs — he made Monday, he is giving his team an even better chance to finish at the bottom.

But don't tell the GM that the franchise is tanking the season so it can be in position to select one of the draft's potential franchise players, Connor McDavid or Jack Eichel. Murray will deny it emphatically.

He can continue to say that. But in this case, his actions are speaking louder than his words.

And Sabres fans who have embraced the so-called "tank" have more reason to be happy.

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The most heart-warming moment of Monday's trade deadline coverage undoubtedly was the story involving the daughter of defenseman Jordan Leopold.

After the former Sabre was traded by the Columbus Blue Jackets to Minnesota, a handwritten letter from 11-year-old Jordyn Leopold to the Wild coaching staff surfaced.

Jordan Leopold began the season with the St. Louis Blues before being dealt to Columbus — his seventh NHL club — in November. The Leopold family lives in Minnesota, and Jordyn's letter — which her mom, Jamie, put on Facebook in January — pleaded with the Wild to bring her dad to Minnesota.

"My dad is very (lonely) without his family," Jordyn Leopold wrote. "We are living in Minnesota right now and I am lost without my dad and so is my mom, my two sisters and my brother. ... We cannot take it anymore."

On Monday, Jordyn got her wish.

"(Trading) Jordan Leopold was about doing the right thing for a guy who was a great pro for us," Blue Jackets general manager Jarmo Kekalainen said.

In the midst of talking about trades and signing players and firing people, sometimes we forget that other people are affected by such moves — spouses, children, parents, siblings, significant others.

Rare as such a move is, it was refreshing to see something like this happen.

"It isn't always just about business," Kekalainen said on his Twitter account.

Amen to that.

Four traded excited and relieved

By Pat Malacaro

WGR 550

March 2, 2015

Tampa, FL (WGR 550) -- The Buffalo Sabres made four trades ahead of Monday's three o'clock NHL trade deadline. For the players traded, the day brought a sense of excitement along with the relief that they day has come and gone, and they are on their way to a playoff contending team.

Brian Flynn was the first player dealt by general manager Tim Murray, just before the rest of the Sabres hit the ice for practice. Flynn's name had come up in the last few days as a potential trade target of a playoff team.

However, the forward was still caught off guard by the deal. He said that "it was surprising, still, when you get the call, 'cause...[it] doesn't sink in I don't think 'til right after." Montreal acquired Flynn for a fifth-round pick in the 2016 NHL Draft.

Flynn also praised the Sabres' organization, saying that he is "really grateful for the opportunity I was given here, going back to Darcy Regier who brought me in and the coaching staff, Tim Murray, everyone has been so good to me. I'm gonna miss the teammates for sure, all the trainers, everything about the organization was first class." Regier signed Flynn out of the University of Maine.

Torrey Mitchell will be joining Flynn as a new member of the Canadiens after Murray traded the forward for a seventh-round pick in the 2016 Draft and prospect Jack Nevins. Mitchell was born in Greenfield Park, Quebec, just outside of Montreal, and is happy to be going to play for his hometown team.

Coincidentally enough, Mitchell walked into the Amalie Arena with Brian Flynn right when he got the call he was getting traded. Mitchell continued that "I get to be a part of that and so does Brian Flynn so we're both equally excited." Both players are meeting Montreal on the west coast as they make a trip through the Western Conference.

Maybe the strangest moment of the day came when Michal Neuvirth saw his name show up on Rogers Sportsnet's trade deadline coverage being carried in the United States on the NHL Network. He added that "it was shocking, you know, I was enjoying my sushi and one of the teammates told me, you know, 'look at the TV' so I looked and I saw it [the trade] so I was a little in shock." After seeing it on

Chris Stewart was not the only player on the way out that will have good memories about his time in Buffalo. All four players traded today are thankful for their time with the blue and gold. Neuvirth added that "I really liked it here, you know, the time in Buffalo, and you know, everyone was always good to me and gonna miss the teammates but, you know, this is a business."

TSN in Canada broke the news to Chris Stewart that he had been traded to the Minnesota Wild for a second-round pick in the 2017 Draft. It was the second of the surreal situations that happened as players watched the deadline coverage on TV. He continued to say that "I didn't even know who I was talking to at the time, and they're like 'have you heard' and I said 'no, heard what' and they're like 'oh, you've been traded to Minnesota' and kinda just awkward silence for a bit and you know, kinda let it settle in and just went on with the interview."

Stewart was relieved to have the trade deadline behind him. Even though he was traded for the third time in his career on Monday, he said that "I'm excited go to a team that has a chance to play in the Stanley Cup, I mean the playoffs, and a chance to win the Stanley Cup, and you know, whatever they need me to do and I'd be willing to do it."

The Sabres will be on the ice Tuesday night at Amalie Arena in Tampa, FL to take on the Lightning. The puck drops at 7:30 p.m., and the only place to hear Rick Jeanneret and Rob Ray is the flagship home of the Sabres Radio Network – WGR Sports Radio 550.

Hamilton: The final steps of suffering are taken

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 2, 2015

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Tim Murray accomplished what he set out to do with the 2015 trading deadline.

First he traded Tyler Myers and Drew Stafford getting Evander Kane and Zach Bogosian in return.

He then let Jhonas Enroth go for a third round pick and a goalie to sit behind Michal Neuvirth.

Today Brian Flynn was the first to go to Montreal. Murray got a 5th round pick back for a player that was going to be a restricted free agent this summer and likely wouldn't have been qualified.

Neuvirth was the next to go as he went to the Islanders to join Jaro Halak, the goalie he was traded for last year. Buffalo got former Bruins goalie Chad Johnson back as well as a 2016 3rd round pick.

Torey Mitchell also went to Montreal for a 7th round pick and AHL goon Jack Nevins.

The final trade, which came down after 3:00, was the one everybody was waiting for, Chris Stewart to Minnesota for a 2nd round pick in 2017. Buffalo already has the Wild's 2nd rounder in 2016.

Both Neuvirth and Stewart spoke to our Pat Malacaro in Tampa and both chastised the organization for trying to lose to draft McDavid. Stewart said he felt bad for the players that are left who block shots and lay in on the line for the team. Neuvirth said, "That's crazy if you want to finish last to get a first draft pick. Playing for last place just isn't right."

Murray said from the start he would try to get picks or prospects for players who are going to be unrestricted. He didn't want them to leave for free.

When Murray became GM, he asked for two drafts with this one in June the second. He said the team will start competing for a playoff spot starting next year so we'll see moving forward. If no trades are made before the draft, Buffalo will finish with 16 first and second round picks in four drafts.

Zemgus Girgensons, Ramus Ristolainen and Nikita Zadorov are already up while Sam Reinhart, Mark Pysyk and maybe Jake McCabe are close.

So where does this leave the organization. They are in 30th place now and many including NHL executives are accusing the team of tanking. Tim Murray said, "I've never been told to finish last, no. If we choose 28th, then that's where we'll pick. I assume that the players that we have here will try to win every game, I assume the coaching staff will try to win every game, they've never had any interference from me, the players have never been told by me to not win, the only talk of that I get is from the Press. We just don't talk about that." Murray wasn't done. He also said, "A good example of that if there's any question is Neuvirth was playing well and started 10 games in a row. If everybody in here thinks that Neuvirth is a much better goalie than Lindback, then if we were trying to lose every game then we probably should've been playing Lindback, but that's not what we're doing."

Buffalo has 19 more games of this and then trying to be the worst team in the NHL is over. The lottery will be held two nights after the season is over and then Buffalo will know where they're picking and who they'll get.

Murray has said that's when the improvement begins. Let's hope we'll never have to witness the last two seasons again.

Buffalo Sabres making trades before deadline

WGRZ

March 2, 2015

BUFFALO, NY-- The Buffalo Sabres are trying to get all they can get before the trade deadline.

With just a few minutes before the deadline, TSN reported the Sabres traded forward Chris Stewart to Minnesota for a 2nd round draft pick in 2017.

The team also traded Torrey Mitchell to Montreal for prospect Jack Nevins and a 7th round draft pick in 2016. Mitchell played 60 games with the Sabres, tallying 7 goals and 7 assists.

Nevins is a forward who played for the Hamilton Bulldogs in the AHL.

The Sabres confirm that goalie Michal Neuvirth was traded to the New York Islanders for goalie Chad Johnson and a draft pick. Neuvirth had come to the Sabres via a trade with the Capitals for Jaroslav Halak in 2014.

Earlier in the day, the Buffalo Sabres traded forward Brian Flynn to Montreal. The Sabres will receive a fifth round draft pick in 2016.

Flynn played 159 NHL games for the Sabres with 17 goals and 24 assists.

Deadline day coverage

By Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

March 2, 2015

Stay tuned for complete coverage of the 2015 NHL Trade Deadline throughout the day, with reports from the Sabres.com team of Kevin Snow and Chris Ryndak, who is with the team in Tampa.

UPDATE: (9:50 a.m.) - In the middle of a busy start to his morning, Sabres GM Tim Murray briefly stepped out of the team's war room for a quick chat with Hockey Hotline host Kevin Sylvester.

Hey Sabres fans ... Enter today's Fan Advantage keyword "DEADLINE" to earn 50 points.

UPDATE: (10:15 a.m.) - The Sabres are in Tampa, and were scheduled to practice at 2 p.m. at Amalie Arena. The practice has been moved up to 11:30 a.m. Sabres.com's Chris Ryndak will provide updates and any breaking news from Tampa.

UPDATE: (10:45 a.m.) - As per TSN's Bob McKenzie, the Sabres have traded Brian Flynn to Montreal for a fifth-round pick in the 2016 Draft. Moments after the news was broken, Flynn arrived at the arena in Tampa.

UPDATE: (11:04 a.m.) - [Click here](#) to read the official release on the Brian Flynn trade to Montreal.

UPDATE: (11:25 a.m.) - Brian Flynn spoke to the media in Tampa after finding out about the trade.

On his career path and the trade

"I don't think it's all sunk in quite yet. I still haven't even really talked to any of the guys in the locker room. I haven't even been in there yet. I'll definitely miss the guys here. I know it's a good group of guys there because Gorgy and Gio came from there. They had nothing but good things to say so it was a weird path but I'm excited about where I'm at right now."

His initial reaction to the trade

"I knew it was a possibility. Tim Murray's pretty clear that anyone who's a restricted or unrestricted free agent this year was up for grabs. It was surprising still when you get the call because it still doesn't really sink in, I don't think until right after.

"I'm really grateful for the opportunity I was given here. Going back to Darcy Regier, who brought me in, the coaching staff, Tim Murray, everyone here's been so good to me. I'm going to miss the teammates for sure, all the trainers, everything. I love the organization. It was first class. But at the same time, I'm really excited for this opportunity that I have – to go to the team that's first place in the East, maybe I have a chance – always when

you have a chance to win, I'll take the opportunity."

On his expected role in Montreal

"I obviously don't expect to go there and play the 20 minutes a night that I've been playing here. They've got a really deep lineup, a lot of good forwards, a lot of guys who can score. If I do play more of a defensive role or kill some penalties and things like that, whatever I can do to help the team win, that's what I'm going to do."

UPDATE: (11:43 a.m.) - The Sabres are now on the ice for practice in Tampa, including potential trade targets Chris Stewart and Michal Neuvirth. Also participating in full is Tyler Ennis, who missed the last two games with a lower-body injury. Ennis is skating on a line with Stewart and Marcus Foligno. -- CR

UPDATE: (11:50 a.m.) - **AUDIO: ESPN's Craig Custance** joined the guys on Hockey Hotline for a quick update.

UPDATE: (12:45 p.m.) - Sabres forward Tyler Ennis says his groin injury has healed, and he will play against Tampa on Tuesday night. -- CR

UPDATE: (1:20 p.m.) - Chris Ryndak spoke to Tyler Ennis and Brian Gionta following today's practice:

ENNIS

On Flynn as a Teammate:

"A great guy. I'm obviously friends with him so it's tough to see him go. He's a very, very good player. I think he's got all the capabilities of being a great player. He was probably our most underrated player. He does everything – penalty kill, power play, played center. He'll be missed."

GIONTA

On Dealing With Uncertainty:

"It was tough. It's something new for myself, obviously, being in the situation we're in. Normally when you're in the hunt and you have a chance, there's not going to be too many moves but today's a little more anxious seeing guys you've been teammates with for a long time possibly going out the door."

On Today's Practice:

"You just have to be as professional as you can. It's another work day. I'm sure it was hard on some guys, but at the same time you have to try and focus. We still have a goal in mind and that's preparing ourselves for tomorrow night."

On Flynn Being Traded:

"It's a tough guy to lose. He's a great player for us, great in the room, very versatile for us. It's a tough loss but he's going to fit in well in Montreal. It's going to be a good fit for him."

On Playing in Montreal:

"It's a unique place to be. Obviously you have to have the right mindset, but a guy like him, he's not going to have a problem."

UPDATE: (1:38 p.m.) - Sportsnet is reporting the Sabres have traded Michal Neuvirth to the NY Islanders for goaltender Chad Johnson.

UPDATE: (2:57 p.m.) - Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman is reporting that Torrey Mitchell has been traded to Montreal. The return in the deal hasn't been announced.

UPDATE: (3:06 p.m.) - The 3 p.m. ET deadline has officially come and gone, but news is still trickling in. This includes Sportsnet's report of Chris Stewart headed to Minnesota.

UPDATE: (4:09 p.m.) - [Click here](#) to read the official release regarding Buffalo's acquisition of Chad Johnson in exchange for Michal Neuvirth.

UPDATE: (4:17 p.m.) - [Click here](#) to read the official release announcing the Torrey Mitchell trade to Montreal.

UPDATE: (4:35 p.m.) - Chris Ryndak spoke with Torrey Mitchell before he left for the Tampa Airport:

On being able to play in his hometown of Montreal:

"A lot of excitement, just going to my hometown and then you're going from the last-place team to one of the best teams that's going to have a chance to win the Cup. I get to be a part of that and so does Brian Flynn so we're both equally excited."

On walking to the arena with Brian Flynn this morning when Flynn found out he was traded:

"I was with him when he found out. It was sort of an awkward situation. I wished him luck and then about three hours later, he was sending me texts saying, 'Are we going to be linemates?' It was a good situation for me and I'm excited obviously that Tim Murray was able to put that together for me."

UPDATE: (4:38 p.m.) - Michal Neuvirth met with the media once the news of his trade to the Islanders broke.

UPDATE: (5:03 p.m.) - [Click here](#) to read the official release of Buffalo's final trade of the day, that saw Chris Stewart dealt to Minnesota.

UPDATE: (5:40 p.m.) Sabres.com caught up with Chris Stewart at the team hotel before he left for Minnesota:

On getting through the deadline and going to Minnesota:

Relief's the best way to put it. It's been a stressful day. When it kind of hit 3 o'clock there and nothing happened, I got really nervous and anxious. I'm just ready to put it behind me and I'm excited to go to a team that has a chance to play in the Stanley Cup and the playoffs and a chance to win the Stanley Cup. Whatever they need me to do, I'd be willing to do it.

On the impact he may have had on his teammates:

I'd like to think I've had a good one. I think my teammates have spoken highly of me and I've made some good friendships and good relationships on this team in the short year I've been here. I've said it since Day One. I've been proud to wear the Sabre, to be a Sabre and I wore it with pride. It's been a first-class organization from the get-go and they've really treated me and my family [well] and took us in with open arms. That's something I'll never forget.