



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*March 6, 2015*

## **Sabres-Senators preview**

By Jeff Mezydlo

Associated Press

March 5, 2015

Back from a stellar road trip, the Ottawa Senators look to continue their surge while facing a team they've often fared well against at home or away of late.

Riding a season-high, seven-game point streak, the Senators seek a sixth consecutive home win over the lowly Buffalo Sabres on Friday night.

Rookie Andrew Hammond made 35 saves and Kyle Turris had a goal and an assist as Ottawa (28-23-11) capped a 4-0-1 trip with Wednesday's 3-1 victory at Winnipeg. Amid a 6-0-1 stretch, the Senators are making a serious push to move into playoff position in the Eastern Conference.

"It's just hard work from everyone on the team," Hammond told the NHL's official website. "Obviously we have that special feeling now, and I feel like it's carrying over (from game to game) where it doesn't matter the team we're playing. We feel like we (can) hang in there and play and be successful."

With Hammond in net throughout the surge, the Senators own a 21-9 goal advantage and have killed 17 of 18 penalties. Replacing the injured tandem of Craig Anderson and Robin Lehner, Hammond's recorded a 1.13 goals-against average, but it's uncertain if he will get the nod in this opener of a three-game homestand.

Originally scheduled Wednesday to make his first appearance since Jan. 21, Anderson was scratched because his injured hand wasn't ready. Anderson has a 1.43 GAA during a nine-game winning streak versus Buffalo (19-40-5), but even if he's able to return, it might be tough to sit Hammond.

"We can't say enough good things about (Hammond)," said Turris, who has six goals and eight assists in 11 games. "We love him. He is playing great."

Regardless, the Senators are only focused on maintaining their solid play.

"We're starting to play the right way and get rewarded for the work we've put in in the past few months," said forward Erik Condra, who had a goal Wednesday and has one with four assists during a four-game home point streak.

Looking for a third straight win against the Sabres this season, Ottawa has earned at least one point in the last seven overall meetings (5-0-2) and outscored them 16-8 during a five-game home winning streak that's part of its 6-0-4 series stretch there.

Buffalo will try to avoid dropping the first three on a five-game trip after Tuesday's 3-0 loss at Tampa Bay. Though point leader Tyler Ennis returned from missing two games with a lower-body injury, the Sabres were blanked after recording 13 goals to win two of the previous three.

After trading away forwards Chris Stewart, Brian Flynn and Torrey Mitchell on Monday, and still minus injured All-Star Zemgus Girgensons (foot), the Sabres are giving their untested youth some experience while getting through the final weeks of a third straight losing season.

"I'm the senior guy. These kids are young men," coach Ted Nolan said. "Before they know it, their careers are going to be over, so our job is to make sure that they stay focused and become the best players they can under the most difficult situation."

Ennis has been held to three of his 15 goals in his last 15 contests. He scored in two straight at Ottawa before going without a point in a 5-2 loss there Dec. 29.

Bobby Ryan scored three of his four goals against the Sabres this season during that home win. He's recorded three goals and eight assists in the last 10 games.

## **Sabres give Grigorenko a chance to shine**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

March 5, 2015

This could be last-chance time with the Buffalo Sabres for Mikhail Grigorenko. And it looks like it's going to be a big chance.

The 20-year-old was called up from Rochester by the team Thursday, and it would seem likely he's going to get the final 18 games to show what he's got before his entry-level contract expires at the end of the season. Grigorenko was installed as the team's No. 2 center between Marcus Foligno and Brian Gionta and will take that spot for Friday's game against the red-hot Ottawa Senators in Canadian Tire Centre.

"I was really excited when I saw a white jersey along with Marcus and Brian," Grigorenko said Thursday in HarborCenter, a reference to the second-line's practice colors. "It's a really great opportunity for me to play with those guys."

Grigorenko, Buffalo's No. 1 pick in 2012, has one goal and one assist in 12 NHL games this year, but his best work to date as a pro came this season in Rochester. He put up 11 goals and 21 assists for 32 points in 39 games with the Amerks, missing most of the last month with a knee injury.

Grigorenko returned for the last two games, scoring his 11th goal in Wednesday's shootout loss in Utica, and said the knee is no issue.

"I got stronger on my skates because of that injury," Grigorenko said. "I had to focus on my leg strength. I've been getting lower on battles in the corners. It helps protect my knee, but it helps my game and gives me better balance too."

"Last night he said he felt much better, had a little bit more jump in his legs," said coach Ted Nolan. "As far as practice is concerned today, I thought he skated as well as I've seen him skate."

The Buffalo offense can use any help Grigorenko can provide. On Tuesday night in Tampa, the Sabres were shut out for the 10th time, tying the franchise record, and have a combined total of just 65 goals this season on their current roster.

"Skill can only get you so far. There's a lot of guys with skill," Nolan said. "But if you have no will with that skill, the skill's no good. He's got to work and compete. If you work and compete with that skill, you should have good results. We're hoping that happens."

In the wake of the trade deadline, four season-long Amerks (Phil Varone, Grigorenko, Johan Larsson and Matt Ellis) were the Sabres' centers in practice Thursday.

"It's almost an 18-game tryout of sorts," said Tyler Ennis, who shares the team lead in goals with Zemgus Girgensons at 15. "It's a chance for them to really show what they can do. It's an opportunity they think they've deserved and a chance to show what they can do."

Some sudden offensive help is needed to prevent the Sabres from going through consecutive seasons posting the lowest-scoring campaigns in the history of the NHL's expansion era dating to 1967.

They are at 1.81 goals per game with just 116 in 64 contests, and continue to stand with the fourth-lowest total since the forward pass was legalized in 1929. The all-time record of 1.71 set by the 1935-36 Montreal Canadiens remains in reach.

Buffalo scored a franchise record-low 150 goals last season for an average of 1.83, just below the expansion-era record of 1.84 set by the 1997-98 Tampa Bay Lightning. No other post-1967 NHL team has averaged under two goals per game for a season.

"You have to shoot the puck first of all," Nolan said. "Shoot it, cross your fingers it hits something and goes in, goaltender misplays it. This league, there's a lot of great goaltenders. There's not a lot of times you're going to get 4-5 goals a game."

Nolan said the Sabres are unsure if Girgensons, struck on the foot by a shot last week in Columbus, will return before the season is over. That was a change in position from last week when Nolan said Girgensons should return.

So unless Ennis gets five goals in the final 18 games, the Sabres will not have a 20-goal scorer for the first time in their history.

"I'm a leader on this team. I need to score goals for us to win. I know that," Ennis said. "It's frustrating for sure that we keep having trouble trying to score, but you can't let it affect you, as hard as that is. We've got 18 games to see how many we can put in the net and how many wins we can get."

## **Sabres notebook: Unheralded goalie giving Sens a shot**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

March 5, 2015

Almost out of nowhere, the Ottawa Senators are in the thick of the Eastern Conference playoff race. And they're doing it behind the incredible goaltending of unheralded Andrew Hammond.

Hammond, an undrafted free agent out of Bowling Green who was signed in 2013, has started seven straight games and posted a 6-0-1 mark with a 1.35 goals-against average and .957 save percentage. On a 4-0-1 road trip that ended with Wednesday's 3-1 win at Winnipeg, Hammond shut out both the Anaheim Ducks and Los Angeles Kings on back-to-back nights, earning NHL First Star of the Week honors.

With Robin Lehner (concussion) and Craig Anderson (hand) both battling injuries, Hammond has taken over the Senators' crease after a call-up from Binghamton of the AHL. Anderson nearly started the Winnipeg game before deciding his hand wasn't ready, but Hammond is expected to get the call Friday night against the Buffalo Sabres in Canadian Tire Centre.

Ottawa has gone 8-1-2 in its last 11 games and entered Thursday four points out of the final wild card in the East. The Senators were 11-11-5 when coach Paul MacLean was fired on Dec. 8. Under new coach Dave Cameron, Ottawa is 17-12-6.

"It's hard to explain," Hammond said after the Winnipeg win. "It's just hard work from everyone on the team, and obviously we have that special feeling now. I feel like it's carrying over where it doesn't matter the team we're playing, we feel like we can hang in there and play and be successful."

Chad Johnson will make his Buffalo debut in goal against the Senators.

"When you join a new team, there's new faces, new systems and a new team to get used to so there's always butterflies going into the first game," Johnson said after practice Thursday in HarborCenter. "You want to go in there, compete hard and do what you can to help the team win hockey games. That's where your mind-set is at, so there's always nerves going into a new team."

Johnson has a year left on his contract, and the Sabres are watching closely to see if he can approach the kind of numbers he put up last year in Boston (17-4-3, 2.10, .925). Coach Ted Nolan said he's looking for Johnson or Anders Lindback to show they want to be a No. 1 goaltender and will ride a hot hand, just as he did with Michal Neuvirth the last 10 games before he was traded for Johnson.

"Everybody wanted to see Lindback, but how can you justify waking up in the morning and going to sleep at nighttime, knowing that you're not playing a goaltender that's playing well," Nolan said. "You can't do it. One of these guys grab the bull by the horns, and they'll get a ride."

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Former Sabres Brian Flynn and Torrey Mitchell were both minus-2 in their debuts with the Montreal Canadiens during the Habs' 3-1 loss Wednesday in Anaheim.

Flynn played 11 minutes, 45 seconds in the game, winning seven of 10 faceoffs and blocking two shots. Mitchell played 9:57 and had two shots on goal. They played together on a line with Brandon Prust.

Chris Stewart assisted on a goal and played 15:06 in his debut for Minnesota, a shootout win Tuesday over Ottawa. Neuvirth has yet to have a start in goal in the two games he's been with the New York Islanders.

Former Buffalo goaltender Jhonas Enroth has struggled with Dallas, going 0-4 in five games with the Stars and posting an ugly 3.61 goals-against average and .867 save percentage. Enroth was at 3.27 and .903 with Buffalo.

Enroth created a few chuckles on Twitter on Thursday while talking to Bills defensive back Aaron Williams when he tweeted, "I got traded to Dallas 2 weeks ago and these 'snow days' they have down here are pretty funny ... "

Replied Williams, who spends the offseason in Austin, Texas, "man you got traded!!!! Nooooo not my dawg."

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Rochester defenseman Jake McCabe will be out for an undetermined length of time after suffering what is believed to be a concussion during Wednesday's shootout loss at Utica.

McCabe was skating through the neutral zone when Utica winger Darren Archibald drove him to the ice. The Amerks forwarded video of the incident to the Sabres' hockey department to apply for possible supplemental discipline with the AHL.

"He went down hard – compounded with the fact he hit the ice," Amerks coach Chadd Cassidy told reporters in Rochester on Thursday. "It's pretty serious. ... There was head contact for sure on an unsuspecting player."

McCabe has five goals and 22 assists in 52 games for the Amerks. He played two games for the Sabres last month.

## **Johnson to make Sabres debut in net vs. Senators**

By Evan Sporer

NHL.com

March 5, 2015

**SABRES (19-40-5) AT SENATORS (28-23-11)**

**TV: MSG-B, BELL TV, RDS, TSN 5**

**Season series:** The Ottawa Senators have won two of three games against the Buffalo Sabres. Senators forward Bobby Ryan, who has played in two of the three games, has scored four goals, including a hat trick in a 5-2 win at Canadian Tire Centre on Dec. 29.

**Sabres team scope:** Buffalo recalled forward Mikhail Grigorenko from Rochester of the American Hockey League on Thursday. He skated on a line with Brian Gionta and Marcus Foligno in practice, and also saw time with the penalty kill unit. Forward Zac Dalpe did not practice, and coach Ted Nolan said he was attending to a family matter, according to the Sabres website. Goalie Chad Johnson, who was acquired before the NHL Trade Deadline from the New York Islanders, will make his Sabres' debut. "If somebody shows something, they're staying in," Nolan said regarding his goaltending situation. "If one of these guys grabs the bull by the horns, they'll get a ride."

**Senators team scope:** Goalie Craig Anderson was expected to start Wednesday against the Winnipeg Jets for the first time since Jan. 21, but was back up to Andrew Hammond. Anderson has been out with a hand injury, and coach Dave Cameron has yet to name a starter. The Senators have won six of their past seven games (6-0-1) to climb back into the Stanley Cup Playoff race and are four points behind the Boston Bruins for the second wild card spot out of the Eastern Conference.

## **Sabres goalie Chad Johnson ready for debut, has chance to grab No. 1 job**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
March 5, 2015

BUFFALO – Just days ago, fans were calling for Sabres coach Ted Nolan to sit hot starting goalie Michal Neuvirth and give wonky backup Anders Lindback some work.

“Everyone wanted Lindback, Lindback,” Nolan said Thursday inside HarborCenter after the Sabres prepared for tonight’s road game against the Ottawa Senators.

Nolan refused to sit Neuvirth, starting him eight straight games before the Sabres traded him Monday.

“How can you justify, wake up in the morning and go to sleep at nighttime, knowing that you’re not playing a goaltender that’s playing well?” Nolan said. “You can’t do it.”

Nolan has played the hot hand all season, something he plans to keep doing for the final 18 games.

“If somebody shows something, they’re staying in,” Nolan said.

Lindback finally played Tuesday, making 32 stops in a 3-0 loss in Tampa Bay. But Sabres newcomer Chad Johnson, part of the Neuvirth deal with the New York Islanders, will make his first start tonight.

“Another one of these guys who’s going to get a great opportunity to show his skill and do it well,” Nolan said. “You never know how it works out down the road.”

Johnson added: “When you join a new team, there’s always new faces and some new systems you need to get used to. So there’s always butterflies going the first game.”

Clearly, Johnson has the upper hand in the goalie battle. The 28-year-old, one of the NHL’s best backups last season in Boston, has a year left on his contract. Lindback will be a free agent.

The Sabres desperately need a goalie for next season. Johnson has a terrific opportunity to impress the team’s brass.

“It’s a good opportunity for me to come in and play a lot of games,” Johnson said. “It’s all you can really do.”

The Sabres are Johnson’s fifth team since 2009-10. He also played for the New York Rangers and Arizona Coyotes before joining Boston, where he developed into a strong No. 2 behind Tuukka Rask with the Bruins, going 17-4-3 with a 2.10 goals-against average, a .925 save percentage and two shutouts in 27 games.

That earned the Calgary native a two-year, \$2.6 million contract from the Isles on July 1.

But Johnson struggled playing behind former Sabres goalie Jaroslav Halak on Long Island. His numbers this season – 8-8-1, 3.08 and .889 in 19 appearances – are among the league’s worst.

Johnson has allowed five goals five times this season, including his last nod, a 5-3 loss to the Carolina Hurricanes on Saturday.

Still, Johnson believes he played well at times with the Isles.

"I let in like 18 goals in four games," he said. "That's going to hurt your statistics. Obviously, in the overall picture, your statistics, they don't look great right now. But I had a lot of good games. The last five or six I was playing good hockey.

"In this league, you got to play well all the time, and if you don't, organizations will lose faith in you and they look elsewhere. I'm confident in my game. I've obviously had success in the past and even this year, too."

Of course, if Johnson had difficulties backstopping the first-place Isles, what could happen in front of the Sabres' porous, league-worst defense? Opponents have pumped 35.3 shots a game on the Sabres this season. The Isles have allowed only 28.2 shots a game.

"You always have games when you're going to get a lot of shots," Johnson said. "In Long Island the last game, like after two periods, I had 36 shots. It wasn't a great game there, so I guess for me it's preparing the same as usual. You never know what to expect. Even in Boston, there was times I had 40-some shots a game or 30-something."

Naturally, leaving one of the NHL's best teams for its worst has "been pretty different, without a doubt," he said.

"You go from a change of atmosphere, a team has success this year, and then to a team that's obviously not," he said. "So there's definitely a bit of an atmosphere change. The guys are really good. (It's a) nice group again."

That change was discussed on TSN during Monday's trade deadline coverage. As Johnson waited on hold, he could hear the panel discussing his season and the Sabres. When he got on the air, he was asked about his new team tanking.

"I'm sitting there on hold while they're talking about my season in negativity with the organization and where I'm going and what they're doing," he said. "I think ... they can say whatever they want, everyone can have their own opinion. That doesn't bother me. It's the idea of the setup, I guess, of it all, to me was a little bit on the unclassy side."

## **Sabres' Mikhail Grigorenko should get long look**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

March 5, 2015

BUFFALO – For once, center Mikhail Grigorenko can relax a little bit. Eighteen games are left in the Sabres' trying season. The NHL's weakest lineup needs reinforcements.

Sabres coach Ted Nolan wouldn't commit to Grigorenko staying for the rest of the year. But the Russian should get a long look after getting recalled from Rochester again Thursday.

This could be Grigorenko's best opportunity since his rookie season two years ago.

Grigorenko, the 12<sup>th</sup> pick in 2012, was excited when he spotted a white practice jersey hanging in his locker Thursday. That meant he would be centering the second line between Marcus Foligno and captain Brian Gionta.

"I think it's a really great opportunity for me to play with those guys," Grigorenko said inside HarborCenter after the Sabres prepared for tonight's road game against the Ottawa Senators.

Grigorenko returned from a knee injury last Friday. He said he feels fine and took his time recovering after getting hurt Jan. 30. The injury helps him battle in the corners because he has a lower center of gravity, he said.

The Sabres summoned Grigorenko on Tuesday but scratched him before sending him back. He scored a goal Wednesday in Utica.

"As far as practice is concerned, I thought he skated as well as I've seen him skate," Nolan said Thursday after watching Grigorenko.

Grigorenko hardly impressed during 12 NHL appearances earlier this season, scoring one goal and two points. He has been solid all season with the Amerks, however, compiling 11 goals and 32 points in 39 games.

"I think I'll just try to play my game and try to do what I did this year in Rochester, try to play the offense and create some opportunities," Grigorenko said about this recall.

Right now, Grigorenko's not alone. Several youngsters, including center Phil Varone and Johan Larsson, have chances to impress with so many veterans gone.

"That's one thing about life you look for all the time, you look for an opportunity," Nolan said. "There's a lot of guys that don't have that opportunity to prove they can play at this level. These guys are getting a golden opportunity now. It's all up to them. There's no pressure involved with it, you just got to get out there and play."

With Grigorenko centering the second line, Larsson moved between Nick Deslauriers and Cody Hodgson.

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Doctors still haven't determined why Sabres prospect Mark Pysyk collapsed during a pickup basketball game Saturday in Rochester, according to the Democrat and Chronicle. The defenseman was briefly hospitalized.

Pysyk could take part in some physical activity next week, "maybe even some skating," Amerks coach Chadd Cassidy told the paper.

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Given Buffalo's proximity to Rochester and a goalie coach eight years removed from his playing career, Nolan isn't concerned about having an emergency netminder.

"That's why we signed Arturs Irbe," Nolan joked. "That rarely happens, but you have to be prepared."

On Tuesday, Florida Panthers goalie coach Robb Tallas hurriedly dressed in the third period after Al Montoya, who relieved the injured starter Roberto Luongo, was also hurt.

The 41-year-old Tallas hasn't played professionally in 10 years.

Montoya briefly stayed in the game, but eventually Luongo, who had been at a nearby medical facility, dressed again and returned.

When former Sabres goalie Michal Neuvirth was injured Nov. 18, the 48-year-old Irbe came down from the press box, dressed and sat on the bench.

**Notes:** Nolan said winger Zac Dalpe, who was absent Thursday, returned home today for a family matter. He isn't sure if Dalpe will be available tonight. ... Amerks defenseman Jake McCabe suffered "what is very likely a concussion" Wednesday, according to the Democrat and Chronicle. There's no timetable for a return.

## **Sabres' Grigorenko wants to show he belongs**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

March 5, 2015

Ottawa, ON (WGR 550) -- Mikhail Grigorenko went to Tampa, didn't play, rejoined the Amerks and scored a goal and then was back in Buffalo on Thursday practicing with the Sabres.

Grigorenko centered Marcus Foligno and Brian Gionta and most likely will play Friday in Ottawa since Zac Dalpe went home to take care of a family issue.

After the trade deadline Ted Nolan spoke of how this is an opportunity for players like Johan Larsson and Tim Schaller. Nolan is excited to see where Grigorenko is at in his development, "No question, last game he didn't have a chance to play, but he had just gotten back from his injuries and said he felt OK, but after his game last night he said he felt much better, he had a little more jump in his legs."

Grigorenko did look good in practice and Nolan noticed, "As far as practice is concerned, I thought he skated as well as I've seen him skate, so hopefully he's ready."

Nobody knows if Grigorenko is going to finish the season here. That's not Nolan's department, but he did say, "Skill can only get you so far, there's a lot of guys with skill, but if you have no will with that skill, the skill's no good, so he's got to work, he's got to compete and if you do that with that skill, you should have good results."

Grigorenko has maintained his new, great attitude the whole season and Thursday was no different, "Or course, anytime you get called up and anytime you get to play hockey, it's a good opportunity whether it's the AHL, junior, the NHL, World Juniors, I think anytime people can see you play, it's a good opportunity, so I'll try to make the best of it and I'm really excited."

If Grigorenko tries to do too much, he'll likely not play well. The centerman said, "I'll just try to play my game and try to do what I did this year in Rochester and try to play offense and create some opportunities. I was really excited when I got a white jersey along with Marcus and Brian and I think it's really a great opportunity for me to get to play with those guys."

Larsson got the first opportunity to center that line against the Lightning and was average at best.

Grigorenko missed some time in Rochester when he hurt his knee. He said, "I had an injury last month, but I think I'm back to where I was before the injury. I think I had a pretty good game last night and I felt really comfortable with my knee."

Grigorenko used the injury to try to improve himself and he can tell the difference, "I got stronger on my skates because of the knee injury with leg strength, I'm getting lower and winning battles in the corner so it helps protect my knee, but also helps my game and to keep better balance in battles." He added, "I really took my time, I didn't want to force it, I didn't want to make it worse so I just took my time and now my knee is 100 percent."

Larsson moved to center Nic Deslauriers and Cody Hodgson while Tim Schaller was between Jerry D'Amigo and Matt Ellis.

Chan Johnson will get the call in goal.

Ted Nolan said Pat Kaleta has started to skate on his own, but is not close to returning.

## **Johnson eager for 1st start Friday**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

March 5, 2015

The 2014-15 season opened with a goaltending competition for the Buffalo Sabres. The year may also end with a battle in the crease, but with two different goalies fighting for the No. 1 job.

Chad Johnson, who was acquired Monday in a trade along with a third-round pick from the Islanders for Michal Neuvirth, will start for Buffalo on Friday in Ottawa.

Anders Lindback made his first start for the Sabres on Tuesday in Tampa, stopping 32 shots in a 3-0 loss. The Sabres picked up Lindback and a conditional third-round pick from Dallas on Feb. 11 for Jhonas Enroth.

Sabres coach Ted Nolan would like to see what the other new goaltender can bring to the table and hopes that one of his two new netminders will become a reliable option down the stretch and possibly beyond. Buffalo has 17 games remaining this season.

"If somebody shows something, they're staying in," Nolan said after Thursday's practice at HARBORCENTER. "If one of these guys grabs the bull by the horns, they'll get a ride."

The Tops Game Night pregame show will begin at 7 p.m. on MSG-B and Bell with puck drop between the Sabres and Senators scheduled for 7:30 p.m. The game can also be heard live on WGR 550.

Johnson last started on Feb. 28 against Carolina. This season, he's 8-8-1 with a .889 save percentage and a 3.08 goals-against average, but mentioned that one bad stretch of games has caused his numbers to balloon. In his past five games, he's 2-2-1, and has stopped 159 of 170 shots (.935 save percentage).

"I was playing good hockey the last month-and-a-half and was getting more games and felt more comfortable," he said. "It was just that one stretch there over two months, I had four games that just didn't go well, I didn't get settled in, had some tough games. That's just how it goes sometimes."

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### **ANOTHER CHANCE**

Mikhail Grigorenko was back with the team and he'll play against Ottawa.

He missed some time due to a knee injury in Rochester but says he's now fully healed. He scored on Wednesday's in the Amerks' 3-2 shootout loss in Utica on Wednesday.

Grigorenko has a goal and an assist in 12 games with the Sabres this season. In Rochester, he's put up 32 points (11+21) in 39 games.

"I think I'm back to where I was before the injury and I thought I had a pretty good game last night," he said. "I feel really comfortable with my knee and conditioning has been really good. I'm really excited to play tomorrow."

Nolan would like to see production from Grigorenko, but also a solid work ethic every shift.

"With him, skill can only get you so far. There are a lot of guys with skill. But if you have no will with that skill, the skill's no good," Nolan said. "He's gotta work. He's gotta compete. And if you work and you compete with that skill, you should have good results. We're hoping that happens."

A spot in the lineup opened up because Zac Dalpe did not attend practice due to family matters, which Nolan did not elaborate on. It's uncertain if Dalpe will be available for this weekend's slate of games. Buffalo will travel after their game on Friday to Washington for a Saturday night contest against the Capitals.

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### **INJURY UPDATES**

Center Zemgus Girgensons was injured back on Feb. 24 after blocking a slap shot off his foot. While Nolan was hopeful that Girgensons would be back before the end of the regular season, he sounded less optimistic about that happening on Thursday.

"With that type of injury, you're hoping to see him, but realistically, I'm not too sure if we will," Nolan said. "It depends on the length of the injury, how [many] games we have left. If we have two, will you risk his rustiness getting hurt again?"

"I'm not too sure of all those factors. There's a lot of factors weighing into that, not just his injury."

Patrick Kaleta has been out since Feb. 15 with a lower-body injury. Nolan said that he's begun skating again, but didn't have any further update.

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### **THURSDAY'S PRACTICE**

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35 Anders Lindback

## **Down on the farm**

By Kevin Snow

Sabres.com

March 5, 2015

### **THE WEEK THAT WAS**

#### ***Friday, February 27: MARLIES 4 – AMERKS 3***

Despite jumping out to a 3-0 lead midway through the game, the Rochester Americans surrendered four unanswered goals, including Greg McKegg's second of the night 4:47 into overtime, as the Toronto Marlies rallied for a 4-3 win at The Blue Cross Arena.

Defensemen Jake McCabe (1+1) and Chad Ruhwedel (0+2) each finished with multi-point outings for the Amerks, while Brayden Irwin and Allan McPherson added goals in a losing effort for the Amerks. McPherson's goal, which served as the Amerks third and final tally of the night, was the first of his AHL career while Irwin found the back of the net for the sixth time in his last eight appearances.

Fifth-year goaltender Matt Hackett started his third consecutive game in net for the Amerks and made 23 saves. He is now 6-4-2 on the year in his 12 starts since being assigned to Rochester at the turn of the New Year.

#### ***Wednesday, March 4: COMETS 3 – AMERKS 2***

Rochester's Matt Hackett matched his season-high with a 37-save performance, but the Amerks lost 3-2 in a shootout to the Utica Comets at the Utica Memorial Auditorium. Despite the loss, the Amerks have now earned at least one point in each of their last four games.

After Utica jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the first period, the Amerks came back by scoring once in the second period and once in the third to force overtime. Comets defenseman Bobby Sanguinetti then scored in the sixth round of the shootout to secure the victory for Utica.

Hackett, who is now 6-4-3 on the season, made several highlight-reel saves throughout the game to keep his team in it, then continued his strong play in the shootout, stopping four of six Utica attempts. Mikhail Grigorenko and Brodie Reid each scored for the Amerks, while William Carrier collected two assists. Chad Ruhwedel and Jerome Leduc also picked up assists in the game.

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### **UPCOMING GAMES**

- Friday, March 6: Rochester @ Hamilton, 7:30 p.m.
- Friday, March 13: Hamilton vs. Rochester, 7 p.m.

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### **AMERKS NOTES**

Rochester (24-29-5-1) sits nine points back of the eighth and final playoff spot in the AHL's Western Conference with 17 games remaining in the regular season. Texas (25-18-12-1, 63 pts.) occupies the eighth spot, two points behind seventh-place Hamilton (28-21-9-0, 65 pts.). Rochester will play eight of its nine games this month against divisional opponents, with the lone exception being a road matchup with intrastate-rival Syracuse on March 28.

The Amerks own a perfect 16-0-0-0 record with the advantage heading into the second intermission this season, with five of those wins coming on the road.

**Matt Hackett** is 2-0-2 with a .925 save% in his last four starts, including a 37-save performance against Utica on Wednesday.

**Chad Ruhwedel** has five points (0+5) in his last four games, giving him 29 points (7+22) in 57 games. All seven of Ruhwedel's goals have been scored on the power play.

Rookie forward **William Carrier** posted his sixth multipoint game of the season with a pair of assists in Wednesday's loss to Utica. The 20-year-old Carrier now has seven goals and 13 assists in 56 games.

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## **UPCOMING PROMOTIONS**

### **Irish Night – Friday, March 13**

The Amerks will host Irish Night presented by MillerCoors in honor of St. Patrick's Day on Friday, March 13 when they play the Hamilton Bulldogs. For just \$20, fans can purchase a specialty St. Patrick's Day T-shirt, along with one "best-available" ticket.

### **Pucks & Paws – Sunday, March 22**

The third annual "Pucks & Paws" Game will take place on Sunday, March 22 when Rochester plays host to the Utica Comets. Fans are encouraged to bring their dogs to the game to enjoy the action alongside them. "Pucks & Paws" tickets are available for just \$20 and include admission for both owner and dog, with \$5 of each ticket sold going to Lollypop Farm, the Humane Society of Greater Rochester.

### **Pink the Rink – Sunday, March 29**

Rochester will host a Breast Cancer Awareness game on Sunday, March 29 when the Amerks play the Toronto Marlies. A portion of the proceeds from the game will be donated to the Breast Cancer Coalition of Rochester (BCCR) and the American Cancer Society's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk. For just \$20, fans can purchase a specialty pink Amerks T-shirt and one "best-available" ticket, with \$2 from each package sold going to the game's overall fundraising effort.