



# **Buffalo Sabres**

**Daily Press Clips**

*October 1, 2015*

## **O'Reilly not going to Minnesota, Eichel likely to sit as well**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

October 1, 2015

Some quick updates today from Sabres coach Dan Bylsma after practice in First Niagara Center:

---Ryan O'Reilly is among the players who will not be traveling to Minnesota for the preseason game Thursday night. O'Reilly's next court date is Thursday morning in London, Ont., for his summer DUI charge. O'Reilly said he planned to talk to his lawyer later Wednesday to see if he would be attending the hearing. He did not know if there would be any resolution to his case on Thursday.

---Coach Dan Bylsma was evasive about the lineup expected to meet the Wild, other than to say it would probably have the minimum eight veteran players in it. Chad Johnson will start in goal. As for Jack Eichel, Bylsma wasn't very definitive but seemed to indicate he did not want Eichel, or anyone else for that matter, playing three games in a row. That would seem to indicate Eichel would take Thursday off and play in the exhibition finale here Friday against Columbus.

---Defenseman Brendan Guhle, felled by a Dion Phaneuf hit on Tuesday against Toronto, has an upper-body injury but is not dealing with concussion issues. He did not practice Wednesday and is sitting out for now. Jake McCabe (upper body) returned to practice fully Wednesday and is likely to play in Minnesota as the Sabres have only six healthy defensemen.

---Veteran winger Patrick Kaleta skated in a practice for the first time since the opening weekend of camp, taking the ice in a non-contact role after the main group and skating with several players ticketed for Rochester.

## **Delayed twice, another O'Reilly hearing Thursday**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

October 1, 2015

Center Ryan O'Reilly will not be with the Buffalo Sabres for their game Thursday night in Minnesota but this is not a simple veteran-gets-a-game-off scenario that you routinely see in the preseason. O'Reilly has another court date scheduled for Thursday in London, Ont., although it's uncertain if he will attend or simply be represented by counsel.

O'Reilly, 24, was arrested on July 9 and charged with driving under the influence and leaving the scene of an accident after crashing his vintage Chevrolet pickup truck into a Tim Hortons in Lucan, Ont. His two prior court dates have resulted in delays and O'Reilly said after practice Wednesday he has no idea if Thursday's hearing will get a resolution in the case.

"It's a long process. I don't know. I'm sorry," O'Reilly told reporters after practice Wednesday in First Niagara Center. "I don't have enough information right now. My lawyer and I have a plan to talk so I can give you guys more information."

O'Reilly has been openly contrite about the incident since the start of training camp, with both the organization and the media. He has declined to say much about the circumstances until the case is resolved.

On the ice, O'Reilly and Jack Eichel were Buffalo's top two centers for the first time in the preseason during Tuesday's 4-0 win over Toronto and O'Reilly said he's been pleased at Buffalo's offensive production; the Sabres are second in the NHL with 21 goals in exhibition play.

O'Reilly said it was particularly good to get an up-close view of Eichel.

"It was nice to actually see him play from the bench and be on the ice with him," O'Reilly said. "His speed, his size, he creates so much out there. He's going to be a phenomenal player. It was an exciting game, nice to see us put the puck in the net like that and keep it out of our own."

Like everyone else in the building, O'Reilly was floored by the acceleration Eichel showed on the short-handed breakaway goal that opened the scoring.

"An amazing goal," O'Reilly said. "He didn't really have the guy beat and then it was just like two strides. It looked effortless for him. He made it look so easy out there. It was a brilliant goal. Using his speed and size like that, he's going to create a lot for us."

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Coach Dan Bylsma was evasive when asked if Eichel would be in the lineup Thursday. Facing three games in four nights with the preseason finale here Friday against Columbus, Bylsma said the team struggled to put together a lineup for the Minnesota trip that included the minimum eight veterans. First-round draft picks like Eichel are considered a "veteran" by the NHL for preseason lineups.

Still, Bylsma said he did not want Eichel, or anyone else for that matter, playing three games in a row. That would seem to indicate Eichel would take Thursday off and play in the game here Friday.

"Game Seven will be very close to what we see on opening night," Bylsma said, referring to the Columbus game and the season opener here Oct. 8 against Ottawa.

When the Sabres and Wild played Sept. 21 in Minnesota, Eichel's short-handed breakaway goal in the third period was the difference in a 3-2 Buffalo win. Chad Johnson is expected to start in goal for the Sabres on Thursday; he started the first meeting before being relieved by Nathan Lieuwen.

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Defenseman Brendan Guhle, felled by a Dion Phaneuf hit on Tuesday against Toronto, has an upper-body injury but Bylsma said he is not dealing with concussion issues. He did not practice Wednesday and is sitting out for now. Jake McCabe (upper body) returned to practice fully Wednesday and is likely to play in Minnesota as the Sabres have only six healthy defensemen.

Veteran winger Patrick Kaleta skated in a practice for the first time since the opening weekend of camp, taking the ice in a non-contact role after the main group and skating with several players ticketed for Rochester. Defenseman Chad Ruhwedel, who has also been sidelined, was in that group.

## **Sabres goalie Chad Johnson confident after tough season**

By Bill Hoppe  
Olean Times Herald  
October 1, 2015

BUFFALO – A season in which he morphed from arguably the NHL's best backup goalie into one of its least reliable hasn't shaken Sabres newcomer Chad Johnson's confidence.

After all, Johnson, 29, landed another good gig prior to the March 2 trade deadline, getting dealt from the upstart New York Islanders to the rebuilding Sabres, who planned to play him regularly.

That was, of course, before Johnson suffered a season-ending ankle injury the morning of his first scheduled start March 6 in Ottawa. Still, the Sabres liked his body of work so much they passed on acquiring another veteran during the summer.

Johnson might play 20 or 25 times this season as Robin Lehner's backup. If Lehner, who has never started regularly, falters, Johnson could receive more work.

In the meantime, Johnson will likely start tonight in Minnesota against the Wild, his third preseason nod.

"I'm always pushing for more," Johnson said Wednesday inside the First Niagara Center. "I'm confident in my game, what I can do in this league. I've played a lot of big games, had good seasons. Last year wasn't a good fit. I'm confident in my game here."

Some goalies, Sabres coach Dan Bylsma said, accept being career backups. Right now, Johnson doesn't possess that mindset.

"He wants the net, needs to get in the net and prove he can play and win hockey games," Bylsma said. "I don't think he's just come in here to be a reliever for eight games, 10 games, whatever that might be. ..."

"That's fine with me. He doesn't need to take a backseat. He's going to get the net a handful of times or a couple handfuls of times, and we need him to step in there and do the job."

Johnson enjoyed a breakout season with the Boston Bruins two seasons ago, going 17-4-3 with a 2.10 goals-against average and a .925 save percentage in 27 appearances behind Tuukka Rask.

But after the Isles awarded him a two-year, \$2.6 million contract on July 1, 2014, Johnson struggled on Long Island, posting some weak numbers – 8-8-1, 3.08 and .889 – in 19 games. Johnson allowed five goals five times.

"It wasn't a good fit," Johnson said. "I felt like I got better. My game wasn't where I needed to be. For whatever reasons, it wasn't there. I did improve. But ever since my senior year of college I think I've had that right mindset, the right edge and the right people to help me get that support."

In bad times, Johnson said he draws "bigtime" on his lone season in Boston.

"Obviously, you can talk about how Boston was a good team ... but I had a lot of good games there," he said.

The Isles wanted better insurance and dealt Johnson and a third-round pick to the Sabres for goalie Michal Neuvirth.

Johnson, who watched as Anders Lindback handled goaltending duties down the stretch in March and April, said he gets along well with Lehner, one of the Sabres' big offseason acquisitions.

"I'm looking forward to working with him," he said. "He's definitely a character."

Naturally, Johnson hopes he has found a home. The Sabres are his fifth team – he also played for the New York Rangers and Arizona Coyotes – since he broke into the league in 2009-10.

"To a certain point it's fun," Johnson said about moving around. "I got to experience New York City, Long Island, the history there, and obviously Boston, winning the Presidents' Trophy. ...

"There's a lot I can draw from different goalies I think has helped me improve. It's tough as well working with so many goalie coaches. I think that's the toughest thing, having to get to know all kinds of players, coaching staff. You never really could get settled in. So I think ... it was nice I was here last year for two months."

## **Sabres' Brendan Guhle not concussed; Jake McCabe ready to play**

By Bill Hoppe

Olean Times Herald

October 1, 2015

BUFFALO – Finally, there's some good news for the Sabres' depleted defense corps: Brendan Guhle didn't suffer a concussion Tuesday when Dion Phaneuf's wicked open-ice hit forced him out of the Sabres' 4-0 preseason win against Toronto.

While the rookie stayed off the ice today inside the First Niagara Center, coach Dan Bylsma said the 18-year-old should be fine. The Sabres also got one of their six injured defenseman, Jake McCabe, back today. McCabe (upper body) is ready to play, Bylsma said.

The Sabres will field a lineup filled with AHL players Thursday in St. Paul, their second trip to Minnesota this season. Bylsma said the Sabres had trouble getting to the eight-veteran minimum. He mentioned rookie center Jack Eichel, as a first-round pick, counts as a veteran, although he wouldn't reveal if he would play.

It sounds like Eichel will play in Friday's preseason finale here against Columbus, a game Bylsma wants to use as a regular-season tune-up with a full lineup. He doesn't want players dressing for three straight games.

Meanwhile, center Ryan O'Reilly, who has a court date Thursday in Ontario for his July impaired driving charge, won't play against the Wild. O'Reilly said he doesn't know if he has to appear in court and plans to talk to his attorney later today.

## **Sabres' O'Reilly not sure if he'll attend his hearing**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

October 1, 2015

Buffalo, NY (WGR 550) -- Ryan O'Reilly is scheduled to have his court hearing outside of London, Ontario on Thursday. O'Reilly doesn't know if he'll be at the hearing, but we do know he will not be in Minnesota for Thursday's game.

There really wasn't much O'Reilly could say after practice about his hearing. He said it's still scheduled, but he hadn't spoken to his lawyer yet and will Wednesday afternoon.

We know that O'Reilly and Jack Eichel will be Buffalo's top two centers this season and Tuesday against Toronto is the first time they both played in a preseason game together. O'Reilly loved what he saw, "It was nice to actually see him play from the bench and actually be on the ice with him. With his speed and size he's going to create a lot of room and there. He's going to be phenomenal player."

In Wednesday's practice O'Reilly centered Matt Moulson and Tyler Ennis. Normally he has Evander Kane on his wing. O'Reilly said he's developing a chemistry with Kane and Ennis, "They're very easy to play with, Kane's speed and he's got a great shot and if you give him a chance, he's going to bury it and Ennis, he's so creative with the puck, he's so shifty that when he gets it he creates so much so quickly, so playing with those guys we'll generate a lot."

Jake McCabe returned to practice on Thursday and seems likely to play in Minnesota.

Chad Ruhwedel and Pat Kaleta returned to practice with the smaller group that practiced after the team.

The Sabres had a fairly lengthy 4-on-3 power play against the Leafs. Dan Bylsma went with four forwards and they moved the puck well, although they missed the net with shots three or four times. Bylsma said if it comes up in the regular season, he'd do it again, "We're going to put on the players that will give us the best chance and I wouldn't be surprised if it would be four forwards. I would do it again, I wouldn't hesitate in the least bit if those were the four players we wanted on the ice, so we'll definitely see it again."

Brian Gionta moved up the depth chart and found himself playing with Eichel and Moulson on Tuesday. On Wednesday he was with Kane and Eichel. Gionta ended the season strong last year and has been impressive in this camp. Bylsma admitted that maybe he's been surprised by his 36 year old captain, "Yes I would be pleasantly surprised. He's been one of the hardest players in our camp. He's been one of the guys that's been doing the dirty work the best, he's been at the net, in front of the net, around the net."

"He's one of the guys that I never look at heights or weights, I just want to know how big you play and he's playing big."

The other lines on Tuesday were Deslauriers with Legwand and Foligno. Four players alternated with each other. They were Girgensons, McGinn, Larsson and Reinhart.

## **Evan Rodrigues making a strong impression in camp**

By Matthew Coller

WGR 550

October 1, 2015

Undrafted college free agents almost never make it in the NHL. Each year, different fan bases get excited about Player X who scored a bunch in his senior season, but once training camp comes around, it's obvious they are bound for the minors. There have been a few exceptions to the rule a la Martin St. Louis, Chris Kunitz and Torey Krug, but they are an incredible minority.

So when the Buffalo Sabres signed Boston University forward and Jack Eichel linemate Evan Rodrigues, it was natural to think he was inked because of the Eichel connection. Consider that pre-Eichel, Rodrigues had only scored 19 goals in three seasons, then put in 21 during his senior season while playing alongside the Hobey Baker winner.

But from development camp to the prospects tournament to NHL training camp, Rodrigues has proven that the Sabres' decision to sign him was more than just a favor to their No. 2 overall pick. Rodrigues can play.

Being average sized at 5-foot-11, 180-pounds and lacking exceptional speed or toughness. He doesn't have the smoothest skating stride and doesn't dangle the puck around like Jonathan Drouin. You can see why the 22-year-old would have been passed over.

Rodrigues does have some tools that trump most of those others: An instinct for scoring goals and the IQ to play at the professional level.

Sidney Crosby has always enjoyed played with Kunitz and Pascal Dupuis. Crosby could play with anyone he wants, but his preference is based on the players who make him better with their skill sets, not the players with the best shot. Rodrigues may have had the same effect playing with Eichel as a Terrier. And it may make him successful at the professional level.

Sabres forward Matt Moulson is a good example. He was a ninth round pick and spent his early years in the AHL before finding a home alongside John Tavares. You might simply say that Tavares gave Moulson a career, but that's a shallow opinion.

When Tavares and Moulson were together between 2010-2014, they had a 50.5% Corsi Percentage and 50.4% Goals For Percentage at 5v5, but apart the Isles' No. 1 overall pick saw a drop to 48.9% and 47.7% respectively. Not to mention Tavares' playmaking skill combined with Moulson's ability to finish at the net turned out to be a deadly combo.

Against the Maple Leafs on Tuesday night, Rodrigues was not playing with Jack Eichel, but he scored twice and showed some of the skills that make him an interesting prospect.

Here, the winger creates puck-handling space for himself by using his teammate as a pick. It's impossible to say whether he shot low to create a rebound for Marcus Foligno, but it seems that way. Rodrigues realizes that Jonathan Bernier did not locate the puck well because of the net-front presence and reacts quickly and creatively.

Of course, being able to put pucks in the net is only part of the battle to becoming an NHL player. The minors are littered with players who have scoring instincts but cannot handle the other parts of the game. It is yet to be seen what type of defensive player Rodrigues will be – we will have to see a bigger sample at the pro level – but his passing skill in the neutral zone and offensive zone has been notable. Remember, he also had 40 assists in his senior year at BU.

On his second goal, the young forward controls a zone entry, pulls up and puts a pass on the tape of Sam Reinhart, who unsurprisingly creates a scoring chance with it. Rodrigues follows up by sensing opportunity.

Rodrigues has stayed on the roster longer than some other players pegged for Rochester, which speaks to his performance thus far. While he will likely get sent down to the Amerks soon, he will leave Buffalo having made a strong impression on Tim Murray and the coaching staff.

In Rochester, he will have a chance to prove that his scoring touch can carry over to the professional level in real games. He'll come into a good situation that will likely feature veteran scorer Cal O'Reilly and several other promising prospects.

Whether he becomes the next Kunitz or Moulson will depend on how he develops.

## **Sabres get ready to wrap up preseason**

By Jourdon LaBarber

Sabres.com

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The Sabres mixed up their lines again at Wednesday morning's practice, but it doesn't appear that they'll have much of an effect on the team's lineup for Thursday night in Minnesota. According to coach Dan Bylsma, Buffalo will carry only eight veterans when it plays the Wild in its sixth game of the preseason.

The following night, against Columbus at First Niagara Center, is when Bylsma has said we should expect the closest thing we'll see to the lineup that the Sabres will use when they open the regular season on Oct. 8.

One person we can expect to play on Thursday is goaltender Chad Johnson, who is scheduled to make his final full start in net of the preseason. Johnson made 30 saves on 34 attempts in his last start on Saturday, a 6-4 win in Ottawa.

Another player we might see in Minnesota is defenseman Jake McCabe, who was back in practice on Wednesday after sustaining an upper-body injury over weekend.

"Every day he's felt much better from his upper-body injury. I think he was fine yesterday and obviously with a full practice today I think he's able to get back to playing," Bylsma said.

Bylsma had more good news regarding his injured defensemen on Wednesday. After leaving the game due to a hard hit by Dion Phaneuf on Tuesday night, Brendan Guhle has showed no signs of concussion-like symptoms, according to Bylsma.

Guhle sustained an upper-body injury on the hit and remains day-to-day.

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### **4-ON-3 FORWARDS**

Tuesday night not only marked the first time we saw Ryan O'Reilly and Jack Eichel in the same lineup, it was also the first time the two centers shared the ice.

When Buffalo earned a 4-on-3 advantage in that game, Bylsma went to four of his most talented forwards to try and score a goal – O'Reilly, Eichel, Evander Kane and Tyler Ennis made up the four-man unit.

"You've got to be a little smart," O'Reilly said. "I think, when we were out there, I kind of try to get myself to make sure I have a little bit of a defensive mindset out here with four forwards. But it's good, it's exciting. We moved the puck quick and we generated a lot of offense."

The super group wasn't able to find the back of the net during their time on the ice, but they did control the puck and create chances. Bylsma said Wednesday that it wasn't just a preseason experiment.

"It doesn't really matter what label you have, 4-on-3 we're gonna put players we think give the best chance [to score]," he said. "I wouldn't be surprised to have it be four forwards."

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### **AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW**

The crowd may have roared for Eichel, but the breakaway shorthanded goal he scored against the Maple Leafs on Tuesday night would have never happened had it not been for a defensive-zone turnover caused by Nicolas Deslauriers.

Deslauriers intercepted a pass that was intended for Leafs forward Connor Brown and immediately fed Eichel. Then, he raced to join Eichel for what he thought would be a 2-on-1 rush.

"And I looked up at the red line and saw him in the zone. I was like, 'Ah, I think I'm gonna stop here,'" Deslauriers said. "He just made a great move and that's how you see how fast he is, I gave him the puck when I was almost equal to him. He blew by everybody."

Deslauriers' assist on the Eichel goal gave him his fourth point of the preseason; he had scored two goals and an assist in two games prior. Just as he did on Tuesday night, he's made sure throughout camp to be in the right position to make plays – whether he's scoring in front of the net, making a big hit, or forcing the turnover that leads to a shorthanded goal.

"It's been good. I'm obviously happy to play with [David] Legwand and [Marcus] Foligno; I think putting Foligno on the right side just makes it a little bit more stable with two big guys. It's fun, it's been one of my best camps since I went pro and I'm just proud of it. There's a little more to do before the season and we're just getting ready," he said.

The Sabres are back in action Thursday night in Minnesota. Puck drop is scheduled for 8 p.m. The game can be heard live on WGR 550 with Dan Dunleavy and Rob Ray on the call.

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