



# **Buffalo Sabres**

## **Daily Press Clips**

*November 12, 2015*

## Sabres-Panthers Preview

By Jeff Mezydlo

AP

November 12, 2015

After the Buffalo Sabres ended a lengthy slide to one team from Florida, they have a chance to halt their road struggles against the other.

The surging Sabres can win three straight away from home for the first time in four seasons by snapping a four-game road skid to the Panthers on Thursday night.

Jack Eichel had a goal with an assist and Chad Johnson made 30 saves to help Buffalo (7-8-0) snap a seven-game skid to Tampa Bay with Tuesday's 4-1 victory.

"It's great to beat them and build some confidence off that game," said Eichel, the second overall pick in this year's draft.

Winners in four of the last five, the Sabres are off to their best start since 2011-12. They had no more than three wins through 15 games in each of the past three seasons.

Eichel, second on the team with nine points, has three goals and three assists in the last five contests.

"It's great," said Eichel, who turns 19 later this month. "I just want to keep putting the puck on net."

The Sabres have killed 13 of their opponents' last 14 power plays and are converting 23.5 percent of their own chances to rank among the league leaders.

Buffalo has allowed one goal in each of its last two games on the road, where it hasn't won three in a row since March 2012. After winning nine road games in 2014-15 and eight the previous season, the Sabres have split their first six away from the First Niagara Center.

"We've battled pretty hard this year," said forward Marcus Foligno, who scored his first of the season Tuesday.

The Sabres, though, have lost eight of nine to the Panthers (6-6-3) after last month's 3-2 defeat at Florida and haven't beaten them on the road since Oct. 25, 2013.

Jaromir Jagr had two goals with an assist in the Oct. 15 win over Buffalo, and his tiebreaker in the third period Tuesday helped the Panthers end an 0-3-2 skid with a 4-3 victory over Calgary. He also had an assist while snapping a four-game point drought, but like his teammates wasn't completely happy with Florida's collective effort.

"We won, that's a good thing," said Jagr, who has a team-leading 12 points. "We feel like we didn't play our best. Everybody felt like we should play a little better.

"We have to make sure we play our best hockey and get some wins together."

Florida needs to improve on the defensive end, having yielded 12 goals in the last three games and allowing two straight opponents to score on their only power-play chance.

"You can't be satisfied with a win; you want to be satisfied with the process," goaltender Roberto Luongo said.

Luongo snapped a three-game skid while making 25 saves Tuesday, but he's allowed at least three goals in six of his last eight starts. However, he's posted a 1.00 goals-against average while winning seven straight starts against the Sabres, including a 24-save effort last month.

Teammate Vincent Trocheck recorded his second goal in three games Tuesday and is one shy of matching his career high of seven, set in 50 games last season.

Johnson, who yielded 14 goals in three starts prior to handling the Lightning, made 26 saves against the Panthers last month.

## **Eichel prepared to face new tactics**

By Mike Harrington

Buffalo News

November 12, 2015

SUNRISE, Fla. – It's just 15 games into his rookie season and Jack Eichel is on the first hot streak of his NHL career.

The No. 2 overall draft pick was clearly the best player on the ice and was an easy choice as first star Tuesday night as the Buffalo Sabres dismantled the Tampa Bay Lightning, 4-1.

Eichel scored the game's first goal, blistering a one-timer past goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy on a Buffalo power play, and set up the second with a neat feed to defenseman Cody Franson.

It was a bit of a coming-out party for Eichel, making his first NHL appearance on national television after the circus atmosphere that surrounded his selection in the draft in June. He'll try to keep it going here Thursday against the Florida Panthers.

Eichel had seven shots on goal Tuesday, one off his season high. But it was his composure with the puck and his strong skating ability that was impressive in a game against the defending Eastern Conference champions. NBC analyst Keith Jones, in fact, called Eichel's play "Lemieux-esque" in a postgame highlight package.

As in Mario Lemieux.

On one second-period rush, Eichel went wide around Tampa Bay defenseman Jason Garrison. The veteran was completely flat-footed and took a hooking penalty, although replays tended to show it was anticipation by an official and a beaten Garrison hardly touched Eichel at all.

"He's definitely a point guard almost in controlling the play," coach Dan Bylsma said after practice here Wednesday. "He drives wide for the shot, draws the penalty on Garrison. Similar play on the goal to Franson, drives wide, pulls up, distributes the puck as guys go through and cut through. He's learning a little bit how to control the game and be effective with his puck possession and his shot."

Eichel is on a three-game point streak, and has notched the first two-point games of his career in back-to-back fashion in the wins over Vancouver and Tampa Bay. He leads the team with six goals and is second in scoring with nine points, four behind Ryan O'Reilly.

He knows opponents are now building a video library on his rookie campaign, so there will be new wrinkles against him over the next 20 games or so. Bring it on.

"I don't consider myself one-dimensional and I like to think I can attack opposing teams more than one way," Eichel said. "I know people will start to see my tendencies but that's hockey. Teams get familiar but you look at a guy like Steven Stamkos or Alexander Ovechkin and teams know they're going to shoot the one-timer on the power play. They still do it all the time and have success. That's how I want to be."

Eichel entered Wednesday's play tied for second in goals among rookies with six (Arizona's Max Domi and Oscar Lindberg of the New York Rangers had seven). Eichel was tied for the league lead in rookie power-play goals with Arizona's Anthony Duclair (3), and was the leader among rookies in power-play points (4) and shots on goal (56).

The chatter in the Buffalo locker room centers around how quickly Eichel has become a focal point of the Sabres' attack.

"Great players like Jack learn quickly," said Tyler Ennis, who has joined Eichel's line with Jamie McGinn. "You can see him progress every game. The NHL is hard. He's doing a great job learning as the game goes. Seven shots are tough to get in this league and his shots were quality shots. On top of it, he made some pretty nice passes too.

"It seems like he can skate past guys without even looking like he's skating. That's how fast he is and how powerful he is."

Eichel is learning the difference between a good shot and a wasted opportunity, and is changing up his approach at times to keep defenders off balance. Byslma said there were actually some chances earlier in the season where Eichel overpassed the puck.

"Early in the year, I was kind of forcing a lot and getting shots blocked," Eichel said. "I've started to feel like I've become more patient. I've hit trailers and done things like that instead of trying to force shots through defensemen. Everyone seems like they get a stick on something here but you still look at the net."

Eichel has been so good that Los Angeles General Manager Dean Lombardi caused quite a stir at the GMs meeting Tuesday in Toronto by openly telling ESPN.com he wanted Eichel on Team USA for next fall's World Cup of Hockey. Lombardi is serving as GM of that club as well.

One problem? As an under-24 player, Eichel isn't eligible. The rules of the tournament mandate the under-24s from the U.S. and Canada have to play for Team North America, meaning Eichel and Edmonton's Connor McDavid are almost certain to be teammates for the first time.

"I tried to get an exception, like 'Let us pick one or two guys, like Eichel,' " said Lombardi, who saw Eichel in the World Championships in May in the Czech Republic while serving as an advisor for USA Hockey.

The NHL's answer was a swift no-chance.

"He's probably just saying that because we spent an entire day in London when we got stuck there and I developed a little relationship with him," a smiling Eichel said.

Eichel said he was with Lombardi and Harvard star Jimmy Vesey, a Nashville draftee, returning from the Worlds.

"Coming back, it was a complete mess of a trip," Eichel said. "We were together in the London airport for like eight hours or so and talked quite a bit. That's just a very nice compliment if that's the case but it's still a long way away."

Nonetheless, Eichel admitted he's thought about the tournament as roster chatter grows. The first 16 players have to be named by March 1.

"It's in the back of a lot of guys' minds," Eichel said. "It's something you want to be a part of because it's an exciting time for the world of hockey, especially for the United States."

Byslma chuckled when told of Lombardi's wish. Said the Buffalo coach: "He said he wants to change the rules for one player? It would be a brilliant move if he can do it. I'd applaud him for that."

## **Sabres notebook: The .500 mark within team's reach**

By Mike Harrington  
Buffalo News  
November 12, 2015

SUNRISE, Fla. – The Buffalo Sabres haven't won three in a row yet this season. They haven't been at .500 since winning the final game of the 2013 lockout season to finish 21-21-6, and haven't swept a two-game Florida trip since a week after Lindy Ruff was fired in 2013.

They can put check marks next to all of those points with a win here Thursday over the Florida Panthers. The Sabres have won four of their last five games overall and two straight on the road.

"There's pretty big significance in it," coach Dan Bylsma admitted after Wednesday's practice in BB&T Center. "Our start was 2-6 and we missed some opportunities to win some games. Now you're looking at going 6-4 and 6-4 to get back to .500 after 30 games.

"But with the stretch we've been on and winning at Tampa Bay, you've put yourself right in the opportunity to get to .500. I think it's a big game. I don't want to keep talking about big games in November, but it is a big opportunity for us to get a win on the road and get back to .500."

The Sabres are 7-8 after Tuesday's win at Tampa Bay, easily their most impressive game on the road in the last three seasons. Based on other results, a win Thursday could potential move the Sabres from seventh in the Atlantic Division all the way to fourth, past Tampa Bay, Boston and Florida.

"We haven't been able to be at .500 for a long time," said winger Marcus Foligno. "It's a goal for our team and then go on from there, being a team on the positive side."

"We're starting to develop a belief we can win and how we can," Bylsma said. "At the beginning of the season, we did some good things but we might not have had the belief that we can win hockey games."

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Foligno was chuckling over his first goal of the season Tuesday, a soft wrist shot that Tampa Bay goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy flubbed and let drop into the net.

"Vasilevskiy gave me one but hopefully more to come," said Foligno, who scored in just one of his final 28 games last season. "You put it on net and see what happens. I'd like to shoot it a little bit harder. Sometimes you catch somebody sleeping and I got a little bit lucky."

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Bylsma said defenseman Mike Weber, who was injured Saturday against Vancouver, has returned to Buffalo and his status is now uncertain.

"He's gone back for evaluation and some tests today," Bylsma said. "At this point in time, we're investigating it being a little bit longer than day to day but we'll see on that."

The Sabres won't call up a defenseman for Thursday's game, with Bylsma saying he could always use winger Nic Deslauriers in a pinch if the need arises.

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- The Panthers snapped a five-game losing streak with Tuesday's 4-3 win over Calgary. They've won four straight home games against Buffalo.

- The Carolina Hurricanes sent forward Brock McGinn back to Charlotte of the AHL on Wednesday, leaving Sabres forward Jamie McGinn as the only one of three McGinn brothers in the NHL. Tampa Bay's Tye McGinn was a healthy scratch when the Lightning were in Buffalo last week, and has since been sent back to Syracuse.
- Thursday's game will be televised as normal on MSG but the radio broadcast will switch to ESPN 1520 because the Bills-Jets game will be on WGR.

## Sabres look to get to .500, visit Panthers

By Joe Lane

NHL.com

November 12, 2015

**Season series:** Forward Jaromir Jagr scored twice, and Aleksander Barkov had a goal and an assist to help the Florida Panthers to a 3-2 win against the Buffalo Sabres on Oct. 15 at BB&T Center. Panthers goalie Roberto Luongo made 24 saves to win his seventh straight game against the Sabres. Tyler Ennis and Jake McCabe scored for the Sabres.

**Sabres team scope:** A win Thursday will put Buffalo at .500 for the first time since the final game of the 2013 season (21-21-6). The Sabres have won four of five for the first time since Dec. 2014. "There's pretty big significance in it," coach Dan Bylsma told the Sabres website. "I don't want to talk about big games in November, but it is a big opportunity for us to get a win on the road and get back to .500." Defenseman Mike Weber (lower body) returned to Buffalo for further evaluation. "At this point in time, we're investigating it being a little bit longer than day-to-day but we'll wait to see on that," Bylsma said. There are no plans to call up a defenseman for Thursday because Bylsma can use forward Nicolas Deslauriers at the position in a pinch. "We're fine with the six we have now," Bylsma said.

**Panthers team scope:** Barkov is expected to skate Thursday after missing the past three weeks with a broken hand. "Not to get too far ahead, but everything is on schedule," coach Gerard Gallant told the Miami Herald. "They said 3-4 weeks and it will be three weeks [Thursday]. It will be day-to-day after that. I can't say he'll play this weekend or next weekend, but things are looking good." Barkov is likely to resume centering Florida's top line of Jagr and Jonathan Huberdeau, which would move Vincent Trocheck from second-line center back to wing. The Panthers' 4-3 win Tuesday against the Calgary Flames ended a five-game losing streak and was the first game in a stretch that includes seven of eight games at home. "It's a huge homestand," Luongo told the Associated Press. "We've got some tough tests ahead of us and we're going to need to be playing some better hockey if we want to win." Florida is 8-0-1 in its past nine against Buffalo, including four consecutive victories on home ice.

## **The Sabres are getting to know each other**

By Paul Hamilton

WGR 550

November 12, 2015

Sunrise, FL (WGR 550) -- When the Sabres came to training camp they had so many new players.

Jack Eichel, Ryan O'Reilly, Evander Kane, Jamie McGinn, Robin Lehner, Chad Johnson, Carlo Colaiacovo, Cody Franson and David Legwand had never played a game together.

You can never tell how long it will take, but the Sabres have won four out of five and five out of seven games. Dan Bylsma said, "I think there was a lot of newness in a lot of places not just players, but when you're looking at nine new roster players and a new coach, it's not just getting used to each other, it's getting used to how we're going to play and how we need to play and I think you're starting to see that."

Cody Franson is somebody that I've noticed in the offensive end. He seems to be making better plays with the puck because he has a sense of where his teammates are going to be. Franson said, "At the start of the year we were a unit that had never played together, so we needed a little bit of time to get to the point where everything is just a reaction and not having to think as much."

It's has improved a lot, but the defenseman said it's still not complete, "It's still a work in progress, but we're doing a good job of trying to improve each day and become fluent with it."

Marcus Foligno scored his first goal of the season Tuesday in Tampa. He said it's not just getting to know teammates on the ice, "It all started in training camp, trying to get to know each other, I mean we're still trying to get to know each other, but one thing about this group is its very close, it's a lot of fun in this dressing room and everyone has a great time with each other, so that translates on the ice and it's been showing now. We've gotten past that first appearance with everyone and everybody really wants to play for each other and stick up for each other."

The Sabres practiced for about 45 minutes after having a meeting at the rink. Mike Weber is no longer on the trip as he gets more information on his lower body injury. Bylsma said, "He's gone back for evaluation and some test today, so at this point in time investigating it means it'll be a little bit longer than just day to day, but we'll wait to see on that."

The team will not call up a defenseman for Thursday's game. Bylsma said they can use Nick Deslauriers in an emergency.

## **Bylsma: 'We're starting to develop a belief that we can win and how we can win'**

By Chris Ryndak

Sabres.com

November 12, 2015

**SUNRISE, Fla.** — The Buffalo Sabres have a chance to make it back to .500 on Thursday with a win over the Florida Panthers. After starting the season 2-6-0, they've been able to put together some good games and are on a stretch in which they've won four of their past five games and five of their past seven.

"I don't want to talk about big games in November and keep talking about them, but it is a big opportunity for us to get a win on the road and get back to .500," coach Dan Bylsma said after practice Wednesday at BB&T Center.

Those five wins have come in varying degrees of fashion. And they've even had opportunities to stay in the games they lost. Here's a look at those past seven games:

1. Zemgus Girgensons scored in overtime on Oct. 27 in Philadelphia to lift the Sabres over the Flyers 4-3. He was sprung for a breakaway following a highlight-reel save from goaltender Chad Johnson. That win ensured the Sabres didn't lose three games in a row for the first time this season.
2. Buffalo closed out that Pennsylvania road trip with a 4-3 loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins two days later. The Sabres put 53 shots on goal and came back from a two-goal deficit to tie the game, but couldn't capitalize to even the score late.
3. The next night, they saw the Flyers again and won 3-1 thanks to a three-point night from alternate captain Ryan O'Reilly and 27 saves from Linus Ullmark in his first-career victory.
4. On Nov. 1, the team traveled to Brooklyn and scored twice in the third period to defeat the New York Islanders 2-1. Sam Reinhart picked up the game winner in that one.
5. Buffalo saw Tampa Bay for the third time in a month and fell behind 3-0 after the first period at home on Nov. 5. While having chances to come back, that game ended up a 4-1 final.
6. On Saturday, overcame a disappointing first period as Rasmus Ristolainen scored with 16.8 seconds remaining in regulation to lift the Sabres 3-2 over the Vancouver Canucks.
7. The Sabres closed out their season series with the Lightning in Tampa, winning 4-1 on Tuesday. Jack Eichel and Cody Franson each had a goal and an assist and Johnson made another spectacular save on the goal line to preserve the lead.

"We're playing well, doing some good things but we're just finding ways to win," captain Brian Gionta said. "By no means are they mistake-free games, but we've had some good goaltending and we've found ways to battle through and get wins."

For Bylsma, the biggest difference between the first eight games and the last seven has been the team's attitude.

"We're starting to develop a belief that we can win and how we're going to win," he said. "Early in the season, we played well. We did some good things. But we might not have had the belief that we could win hockey games."

He cited the fifth game of the season in which the Sabres lost 2-1 to the Lightning in Tampa. Bylsma thought they played better in that game than in their 4-1 win on Tuesday, but that at that time, they perhaps didn't have the mindset that they could come back to win. The rally in Brooklyn is one example of how the team has gained confidence in tight games.

"We bought in a little more. I think we're playing way better," forward Nicolas Deslauriers said.

Deslauriers also noted how the team's forecheck and wall play have been better recently. That's led to more offensive opportunities and increased zone time.

"As a D-man, you don't want to go get that puck when you've got two guys coming for you," he said. "We just need to stay in the structure and last game was probably one of our top games on the forecheck. We just need to build off that."

Heading into Thursday's contest against the Panthers, the Sabres will be seeking a better start. They went down early in the last game between the two teams back on Oct. 15. Jaromir Jagr scored twice in a 3-2 win.

Overall though, the last little stretch of games has helped the Sabres believe that they can overcome mistakes and battle through 60 minutes for a good shot at earning two points.

"We feel good. We feel like we're in the game and regardless of what the score is, we still have a chance," Gionta said. "That's what you want from your team, is whether you're trailing 3-1 or you're up 2-1, you have a good chance of winning that game."

Faceoff on Thursday is set for 7:30 p.m. The Tops Gamenight pregame show begins at 7 p.m. on MSG-B and Bell TV. The game can also be heard live on ESPN 1520.

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#### **INJURY UPDATE**

Bylsma said after practice that defenseman Mike Weber returned to Buffalo to be further evaluated for the lower-body injury he sustained Saturday against Vancouver. Weber practiced Monday but left Tuesday's morning skate early. He did not play against Tampa.

The Sabres have no plans to recall a defenseman for Thursday's game as they have six healthy bodies now and, in case of emergency, they can give Deslauriers some shifts on the blue line.

Weber was the only Sabre on the active roster who missed practice.